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Jan. 19, 2003, 11:50PM

U.S. officials hint at Saddam's exile

Rumsfeld calls haven 'fair trade' to avoid war

By **STEVEN R. WEISMAN**
New York Times

WASHINGTON -- Three top officials of the Bush administration hinted Sunday that they might consider allowing Saddam Hussein to find a safe haven from Iraq if that would avoid a war, even as they rejected calls for delay before confronting him militarily.

Asked if such a haven could also mean forgoing war crimes trials, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld suggested that he personally "would recommend that some provision be made so that the senior leadership in that country and their families could be provided haven in some other country. And I think that would be a fair trade to avoid a war."

In recent weeks, administration officials have spoken of offering leniency to Iraqi subordinates who break with Saddam, but have not spoken so directly of making similar offers to him. At the same time, administration officials say they regard the possibility of Saddam leaving voluntarily -- with or without an amnesty arrangement -- as extremely remote.

Secretary of State Colin Powell on Sunday urged Saddam to "listen to them carefully" when other nations urge him to abdicate. And Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, said "it would be good to explore it," but added: "I just think that it is unlikely that this man is going to come down in any other way than to be forced."

All three asserted that the moment of decision was fast approaching on whether Saddam's regime had complied with the disarmament demands from the United Nations Security Council.

Meanwhile, in Baghdad, the top two U.N. arms inspectors said Iraq had disclosed four more empty chemical weapons warheads similar to the 12 discovered by an inspection team last week.

U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix also said the Iraqis offered three or four of 11 documents requested by the United Nations.

Blix did not say when or where the additional warheads were found.

In Washington, White House spokesman Scott Stanzel said the Iraqi declaration of the four warheads "should not be mistaken for genuine cooperation in an effort to disarm."

Rumsfeld said that the decision on whether Iraq is cooperating with the United Nations would be made "in a matter of weeks, not in months or years."

Rumsfeld's emphasis on urgency, echoing the comments of the others, seemed aimed at rebutting the talk in recent days that the inspections process should be allowed to play out in the next year.

Powell, who as the administration's top diplomat was instrumental in helping negotiate the resolution that set up the current round of inspections, joined the others, who are generally seen as more hawkish, in suggesting that the process cannot continue indefinitely.

The point was approaching, he said, when "it doesn't make any difference how long the inspection goes on, because they're not going to get to the truth because Saddam Hussein does not want them to get to the truth."

This judgment, he said, will come after the report of Blix to the Security Council on Jan. 27, adding: "I think that a persuasive case is there now that they're not cooperating."

The three officials' comments, in a carefully coordinated round of television appearances, appeared calculated to both increase the military pressure on Baghdad and to shake up the calculations being made by Saddam and his closest family members and associates in the nation's leadership.

Both Rumsfeld, appearing on ABC's *This Week*, and Powell, on *Late Edition*, said that exile, possibly coupled with an amnesty plan for some Iraqis, would be preferable to war.

Administration officials say the possibility of exile or a coup in Iraq is so unlikely in part because of the tight grip that Saddam has over the forces around him. These officials have tended to dismiss reports out of Saudi Arabia and other countries to the effect that a coup or exile were possible.

"The Saudis don't have close ties with anyone in Iraq, including dissidents," said an administration official, who suggested that talk of a coup or exile was coming from Arab and Muslim capitals, where leaders want to convince their people that all avenues are being pursued to avoid war.

The comments of administration officials came as Powell prepared for a critical meeting of foreign ministers of the Security Council at the United Nations today.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:50AM

Marathon milestones

Engaging race for runners, especially for one couple

By JANNY HU

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For many participants, Sunday's 2003 HP Houston Marathon marked the end of a long and satisfying journey. For Texans Bob Linza and Jean Campbell, it also marked the beginning.

With the help of family and friends and a huge yellow banner that read: "Jean, Will you join me in the marathon of life? Will you be my wife?" Linza stopped at the turnaround point of the half-marathon and popped the question to Campbell, his longtime girlfriend.

Make that his fiancée.

"Everybody stopped talking to me, so I knew something was going to happen," Campbell, of Houston, said with a laugh.

She accepted the proposal with a "yes" and a kiss before Linza's plans hit a minor snag. Campbell's hands were swollen after running nine miles of the 13.1 mile half-marathon, and she was unable to slide the engagement ring over her left ring finger.

But Campbell, 42, took the setback in stride. She stuck the ring on her pinky, exchanged her birthday hat for a wedding veil with Mickey Mouse ears, and kept running until the couple crossed the finish line hand in hand.

It was that kind of banner day for Houston's largest single-day sporting event. A record 11,879 runners, walkers and wheelchair-bound athletes tested their endurance in Sunday's three races -- the 24 Hour Fitness 4 miler, the EP 13.1 miler and the featured 26.2 mile marathon -- while an estimated quarter million people cheered them along the routes.

"It's a chamber of commerce day, a no excuses day," said first-year race director Brant Kotch. "It's been a tremendous experience for everybody involved. It's gone so smoothly this year, and our numbers went through the roof -- we've increased by 2,200 runners in the three races.

"I can't explain it. The races were fantastic. (Marathons) are like track and field competitions a lot of

times. There's so much emphasis on splits and world records that so often the competition is unimportant. Was it a good race? We couldn't have asked for better."

With temperatures hovering around 32 degrees for much of the morning, runners treated spectators who braved the chill to a bevy of athletic accomplishments.

There was local marathon guru Sean Wade, 36, who used a dramatic final-mile charge to take home his first men's title. There was Russian Albina Galliamova, 38, who returned to the Houston Marathon after a 10-year hiatus and won the women's division.

And there was runner-up Madeline Tormoen, who 18 months ago suffered a heart attack minutes after winning a race in her hometown of Colorado Springs, Colo. Tormoen, 41, had a defibrillator implanted in 2001.

No, it isn't wise for her to run marathons, especially with a defibrillator, Tormoen said afterward. But she said she did so to stay in control of her life.

That was a theme heard all around the George R. Brown Convention Center on Sunday, where the start/finish line was located. Some pumped their fists in jubilation as they crossed the finish line; others headed straight for the medical tents, their bodies exhausted and depleted.

Still others, like Houston's Raju Patel, could have used the assistance of a wheelchair, but he was determined to tough it out.

Patel discovered about five years ago that he had diabetes but paid little notice. He figured he was in good health. Then in April 1999, he suffered a diabetes-related stroke.

After three months of rehabilitation, Patel was back on his feet. He wore an ankle brace that bends when correct pressure is applied.

"I didn't take care of the (diabetes) before, but now I'm in control," said Patel, 49, who was accompanied by his daughter, Mira. "Who are we? We are winners. I always tell my daughter, 'Never stay in line; always make your own.' Everything is possible. If you make a goal, you can do it."

Scott Strand of Birmingham, Ala., and Beth Old of Douglasville, Ga., won respective half-marathons; Houston's Ramiro Bermudez captured his third consecutive wheelchair marathon.

Local runners Brittany Brockman, 17, and Justin Chaston, 34, won their 4 milers. Chaston beat out 2002 Houston marathon winner Drew Prisner, who finished second in the short race.

Jan. 19, 2003, 11:32PM

Dream, reality dot boulevard

MLK thoroughfare has 'good, bad, ugly'

By CLAUDIA FELDMAN

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Today, as Americans honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., Dwayne Jordan will pay his respects amidst screeching saws and flying wood chips.

The general contractor is renovating dilapidated houses on and around Martin Luther King Boulevard.

"It feels so good here -- this is a historical spot," he says, pausing from the job at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Northridge. "The name of this street means something."

The slain civil rights leader stood for equality and peace. Jordan says he is starting to see those ideals reflected on the boulevard that cuts a wide swath through the southeast Houston neighborhood.

The mood along the street, however, is mercurial. Some days the sky is blue, the people standing in line at a favorite hamburger heaven are full of fond neighborhood memories, and signs of renewal and economic recovery abound. Other days the sky turns threatening, aimless young men with beer cans hang out on street corners, and the boarded-up stores and piles of garbage stand out as if dripping in magenta paint.

"The good, the bad, the ugly, it's all there on Martin Luther King," says Ada Edwards, councilwoman for District D. "Our challenge is to marginalize the bad and the ugly and maximize the good. What's good are the quality, hard-working people who live there."

Most of them, as Edwards knows, have strong opinions about the future of their street.

Barry Simmons, accounts manager for the weekly publication *Style Houston*, looks at the seven-mile thoroughfare and sees a big zero.

It's nice, Simmons says, that the city has planted trees in the medians and made some improvements to the infrastructure. But, he moans, there are no serious clothing stores, bookstores, restaurants, nightclubs -- not even strip clubs or car lots to make the Houston neighborhood a destination.

"The name, Martin Luther King, has lost its magic," Simmons says. "This is a barren location."

Or a spring garden.

Anika Sala, manager of the Shrine of the Black Madonna bookstore, art gallery and community center, says the great man would be proud of his street if he could see it now, and he'd be proud of the strenuous community efforts to chase away criminals and drug addicts.

Cardinal Aswad Walker, a spokesman for the Shrine of the Black Madonna Pan African Orthodox Christian Church, remembers when the congregation bought two apartment complexes that housed the worst of the neighborhood thugs. But residents of a third complex known as "the bucket of blood" still caused plenty of trouble.

Walker was patrolling the area one night when a bullet zinged past his head. Police officers were daily visitors. Drug busts occurred daily, too.

"The church couldn't let that go on," Walker says. "We bought the third complex, and that changed the community dramatically. Since then, there's a new sense of dignity, pride and power."

Dr. Charles Wilson, a neighbor at 5701 Martin Luther King Blvd., says church members protect his animal hospital as well as their property, and he is grateful.

Wilson has worked as a veterinarian at the same location for 44 years. He began his career in the 1950s, when the neighborhood was new and filled with Anglo families buying their first homes.

Then, the thoroughfare was known by its original name, South Park Boulevard, and the new outdoor shopping center at South Park and Griggs, Palm Center, attracted customers from all over the city.

The boom lasted through the '60s and into the '70s. Then many Anglo residents left for bigger homes or the burgeoning suburbs, and African-Americans became the majority voice in the neighborhood. In 1977, after considerable campaigning by local African-American leaders, South Park was renamed Martin Luther King.

By the early '80s, Palm Center was fighting a losing battle against newer, indoor malls.

"People were up in arms," remembers state Sen. Rodney Ellis. "They wanted the city to bail out the shopping center."

City officials tried but failed. Ultimately, they replaced the hustle and bustle of the shopping center with other useful institutions -- a post office, a library and offices for a justice of the peace, the Houston Urban League and Houston Read Commission.

During bad times on the street, Wilson says clients expected him to leave. He couldn't, he says.

"I was making a good living. I felt needed."

The neighborhood is coming back, Wilson predicts. "I see a lot more people stepping up to take responsibility."

At the McCoy and Harrison Funeral Home just up the street, the owners of the family business try to see that students at nearby Peck Elementary have what they need during the holidays.

When families can't afford to bury their loved ones, Brenda Lee and her sister, Helen Abernathy, try to help. They are proud of the Martin Luther King address, Lee says. She thinks the neighborhood is on the upswing, and she hopes folks will remember King's politics of peace and economic equality on his birthday.

Down at Burger Park, the line stretches out the door.

The draw is the food -- simple, cheap, good. Most folks order burgers and fries, including Melinda Johns and her husband, Tremain. They grew up in the neighborhood, known as South Park, then left for fancier houses and more complicated lives.

Their lives are about to get more complicated, still. She has joined the Army, and the couple and their six children are about to be transferred to Germany.

The Johnses came to Burger Park, she says, for one last taste bud explosion.

The neighborhood looks good, they say, lingering before returning home to Jersey Village.

At Maxie's Barber and Beauty Mall at Griggs and Martin Luther King, the place is humming. There are three hair salons -- two for women and one for men.

In the front, in the shop for young women, the conversation runs from this to that. Men. Fashion. Weekend plans. In the back, in the shop for older women, mild-mannered stylist Vesta Williams is talking war and peace.

Martin Luther King would not like to hear this talk of war in Iraq, she says. Probably black and brown Americans will wind up fighting, she says, but King didn't think like that. "Children, whether they're black, brown, white or green, shouldn't have to go to war."

In the front of the shop, mall owner Adell Maxie is trimming the hair of an old school friend. A few years ago, the longtime barber yearned for a bigger shop.

"I didn't know I'd get this big," he says.

Maxie's idea was one-stop shopping for the whole family. "A laid-back place where nobody would be in a real hurry to get it done," he says. "People can come here and spend a long time. They might sit down and read the paper. It's a place for gossip and all that good stuff."

The mall just celebrated its second-year anniversary, and so far, Maxie says, all is well. He has high hopes for the mall. He has high hopes for the boulevard. He loves the address, the association with Martin Luther King.

"In any city in the United States, you can go to Martin Luther King and know you're among us."

Children at Peck Elementary, which borders Martin Luther King, and the Gateway MLK Head Start Center, facing Martin Luther King, have a holiday today.

Friday, teachers talked to their charges about the man whose birthday they are celebrating. At the day-care center, 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds marched in an informal parade and learned simple biographical facts. They also chewed on the word "assassinate."

In a third-grade classroom at Peck, kids learned that the senior Kings kept their kids off streetcars and away from movie theaters so they wouldn't have to confront segregation and racism.

Which is partly why the general contractor, Dwayne Jordan, is working so hard today. The homes he works on have hardwood floors, spacious kitchens, full baths, multiple bedrooms.

They're affordable homes, he says, and fit for King.

Jan. 19, 2003, 11:24PM

This one spread like plague

Tech professor's blunder overblown when feds, media started 'conjuring up hysteria.'

By **JIM HENDERSON**

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LUBBOCK -- Two years ago, none of this would have happened.

A medical researcher who inadvertently destroyed biological materials and lied to cover up his blunder would have been disciplined and warned to be more careful in the future, some experts say.

No more, not in the season of terror.

Last week, the engines of homeland security thundered across the South Plains and slammed into Texas Tech University like a smart bomb. Dozens of agents sealed off laboratories, collared professors for questioning and visited the medical school dean at 1 a.m. with a warrant to look into his refrigerator.

After a brief but blitzlike investigation, the doctor in charge of the missing pathogens -- a bacteria that causes bubonic plague -- was polygraphed, arrested, handcuffed and jailed without bond.

The FBI announced that the missing material was "accounted for" but showed no signs of winding down the investigation. New agents arrived on campus late in the week, more searches were conducted, more polygraphs administered.

All this over a small quantity of bacteria that, a string of experts has agreed, is relatively common in the Southwest, cannot be converted to biological weapons and is easily treated with antibiotics.

"It seems like an inappropriate response to a non-threat," said Dr. Ted Warren Reid, director of ocular cell biology in Tech's Department of Ophthalmology, one of numerous professors who began rallying to support a "respected colleague" at week's end. "Something is totally out of control here."

Still, all anyone knew was the sketchy information released by the FBI in court documents.

Dr. Thomas Butler, 61, chief of the infectious disease division at Tech's Health Sciences Center, reported

to his superiors at 3:30 p.m. last Tuesday that 30 vials of the bacteria were missing from his lab.

Dr. Richard Homan, dean of the School of Medicine, immediately contacted the authorities, and cops were prowling the Health Sciences building within hours. House calls to faculty members, by some accounts, continued until the wee hours.

By 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, the news of missing vials was being reported on cable news networks, which stayed with the story almost exclusively until shortly after 2 p.m., then dropped it like a bad sitcom when the FBI announced there was no terrorist threat.

Lubbock City Councilman Frank Morrison blamed the media for "conjuring up hysteria" over what turned out to be a non-event.

"The Avalanche-Journal reported on its Web site that vials of bacteria had been stolen. There was no indication they were stolen. Even if they were, it would be like reporting stolen vials of the flu," he said.

When television got the news, he said, it was "damn the truth, full speed ahead in an effort to be first.

"Fortunately, it blew up and went away before anyone knew about it. If you weren't listening to the radio or watching television between 10:30 and 2 o'clock, you never knew this happened until it was over."

Although most television reports included interviews with experts who said the plague-causing bacteria posed no broad threat, references were made to the millions of deaths resulting from the plague that swept Europe 500 years ago.

"When they showed that picture of the black death spreading over Europe, it scared me -- and I'm fearless," said Floyd Holder, Butler's attorney.

Around the Health Sciences Center, there was no panic, however.

"Most of us realize we work in an environment that is not typical," said Glen Provost, vice president for health policy. "We know what kinds of things we have around here. It's not just the materials in the laboratories, but patients coming in with infectious diseases."

To most of those who followed the rapidly developing details, the biggest enigma was Butler: A graduate of Vanderbilt and Johns Hopkins, U.S. Navy officer in Vietnam, one of the nation's most respected medical researchers in his field, active Presbyterian, family man.

Why would he risk his career, even his freedom, to cover up what he later told FBI agents was the accidental destruction of bacteria by claiming it had been lost?

Matt Sheldon, a recent Tech graduate who tends bar at Cricket's Bar and Grill across the street from the school's main entrance, said he didn't hear the news until the radio woke him up at 2 p.m. Wednesday and his first thought was "how the hell can you misplace vials of plague?"

And when the FBI announced Butler had been charged with making a false statement to federal authorities, he was even more puzzled.

"I think I would rather take the rap for accidentally destroying them than for losing them," Sheldon said.

Butler's colleagues were also scratching their heads.

"We were relieved that there had not been a security breach," Provost said, "but his motives are a mystery to us."

Some speculated that Butler may not have documented the destruction of the bacteria and feared that would cause problems with the university and the sources of his federal funding.

Apparently, he initially told the FBI the same story he told the med school dean but changed it after a polygraph test.

Provost said that before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Butler probably would have been disciplined, but probably not fired, probably not locked out of his laboratory and probably not jailed.

"Things are different now," Provost said. "It was just amazing ... people moved so quickly. I was impressed."

In a Saturday editorial, the *Avalanche-Journal* praised the quick work of the investigators, but even as that editorial was being written, faculty members of the Tech medical school were meeting to express support for Butler and question the severity of his treatment.

"The faculty was very, very upset," Reid said. "Imagine the effect this could have on researchers. It's a problem for the whole country that happened to happen here. It's scary as hell."

Marsha Chapman, Butler's neighbor and longtime friend -- she first met him 20 years ago when her parents worked with him at a hospital in Bangladesh -- seemed stunned that the U.S. attorney would label him a flight risk and ask that he be held without bond.

"This man is the most kind-hearted, gentle spirit you would ever want to know," she said. "He has a lot of friends and we are horrified that he has been treated like a criminal, like the rapists and robbers and others in that jail. They are trying to make an example of him."

Butler has another court appearance Tuesday, one to determine if he can post bail.

Jan. 19, 2003, 9:13PM

Volunteer firefighter dies inside burning building

By MIKE GLENN

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PORTER -- A Porter volunteer firefighter died Sunday when flames trapped him and three other firefighters inside a burning building in Montgomery County.

The fire that killed Gary Staley, 33, who had been with the department about a year, broke out about 9:45 a.m. at a classic and antique car showroom at Loop 494 and Hammond north of Kingwood.

Porter firefighter Juan Chapa, 20, and Allen Haynes, 28, of the New Caney Volunteer Fire Department escaped but were rushed to Memorial Hermann Hospital with second- and third-degree burns to the face, neck and chest.

"It's my understanding that they are stable at this time," said senior investigator Jimmy Williams of the Montgomery County Fire Marshal's Office.

The fourth firefighter made it to safety and was treated by paramedics at the scene.

State and county fire marshals and the arson task force from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were at the scene late Sunday, searching through the building's remains.

Officials said they didn't know what sparked the flash fire.

Firefighters, wiping away tears and holding each other for support, formed an honor guard as the flag-draped body was carried to a hearse.

"Gary will never be forgotten," said Porter Fire Chief Jody Binnion.

Crews from area fire departments responded to the blaze after witnesses spotted smoke coming from the rear of the not-yet-opened business. Staley and the other firefighters were wearing full protective gear as they guided a hose inside the building. Binnion heard an explosion about a minute later.

"When I turned around, I saw the three guys crawling back out. They followed the hose," he said. "We don't know why or how Gary got separated from the other three guys."

After the flames were extinguished, Staley was found fewer than 20 yards from the hose that could have led him to safety.

"We train our guys strong and hard. They are smart firefighters," Binnion said. "There's not a typical fire. It can happen anywhere at anytime."

A worker was laying tile in the building when the fire broke out. After cleaning the floor and applying adhesive for the tiles, he plugged in a heater and spotted a thin blue flame shoot from the wall socket.

"It was about the size of your finger. As he turned, the whole room was just engulfed in flames. All he could think about was just getting out," said the Rev. Mitchel Bell, a Porter minister who drove the man home after paramedics treated him for burns.

"He could see the flames but he could see through them. He ran out of the building," Bell said.

Neighbor Vernon Sutton dashed from his home after hearing the eruption next door.

"You could tell smoke was coming out of the building," he said. Even before fire crews arrived, Sutton spotted people pushing the company's classic cars away from the flames.

Like other Porter residents at the scene, Sutton mourned the loss of the hometown firefighter.

"It's bad for anybody to die, but it's one of the Porter boys, so that really makes it bad," he said.

In 1995, a Porter firefighter died of cardiac arrest while responding to a call, but Staley's death was the first fire-related fatality since the department was formed in 1962, officials said.

Staley worked in The Woodlands as an accountant for Anadarko Petroleum, but Binnion said he was devoted to his volunteer work.

"He was a strong guy (and) loved the Fire Department," Binnion said. "If we would have let him, he would have spent the night, every night up here at the station."

Staley was single and had an 8-year-old daughter, officials said.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:50AM

Marathon milestones

Engaging race for runners, especially for one couple

By JANNY HU

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times. There's so much emphasis on splits and world records that so often the competition is unimportant. Was it a good race? We couldn't have asked for better."

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And there was runner-up Madeline Tormoen, who 18 months ago suffered a heart attack minutes after winning a race in her hometown of Colorado Springs, Colo. Tormoen, 41, had a defibrillator implanted in 2001.

No, it isn't wise for her to run marathons, especially with a defibrillator, Tormoen said afterward. But she said she did so to stay in control of her life.

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Patel discovered about five years ago that he had diabetes but paid little notice. He figured he was in good health. Then in April 1999, he suffered a diabetes-related stroke.

After three months of rehabilitation, Patel was back on his feet. He wore an ankle brace that bends when correct pressure is applied.

"I didn't take care of the (diabetes) before, but now I'm in control," said Patel, 49, who was accompanied by his daughter, Mira. "Who are we? We are winners. I always tell my daughter, 'Never stay in line; always make your own.' Everything is possible. If you make a goal, you can do it."

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Local runners Brittany Brockman, 17, and Justin Chaston, 34, won their 4 milers. Chaston beat out 2002 Houston marathon winner Drew Prisner, who finished second in the short race.

Jan. 19, 2003, 11:30PM

Embracing active duty

Reservists shed life as civilians to prep for war

By **EDWARD HEGSTROM**

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When the commander ordered his troops to line up in formation before dawn Sunday prior to boarding the bus, the men and women of the U.S. Army Reserve's 808th Engineer Co. transformed from part-time civilians to soldiers ready for war.

They had arrived at their northwest Houston reserve headquarters with their families, talking about their regular lives as students, construction workers and police officers. They left on charter buses that would take them to Fort Hood, which almost certainly will serve as a staging ground before heading to the Middle East. They could be gone as long as a year or two.

Older soldiers brought their children to see them off. Younger ones arrived with parents and grandparents.

"Be safe and watch out," Raymond Hudson advised his daughter, Private Chernella Hudson, 19.

Some parents and spouses broke down. Others tried to keep good cheer.

"Look happy," Kathy Wilkinson of Cypress said to her soldier son before snapping a picture.

"I'm too tired to be happy," responded the son, Pvt. Kendall Wilkinson.

Some relatives carried flags, and one man wore an American flag tie.

But a few expressed doubts about the wisdom of the war.

"I'm not very happy about this," Concepcion Calzada said in Spanish as her son, Roberto, prepared to board a bus. "I don't agree with what the president is doing."

Unit commander Brian Williams says he does not know where the 808th will go, though there have been reports that it may be headed to Kuwait. As Army Reserve engineers, the soldiers expect to be put to work building things.

"Engineers build airstrips; we build the pipelines that run up to those airstrips," Williams said. "We build bunkers, anything that needs to be built -- that's what we're here for."

In peacetime, reservists are required to train one weekend a month. They also have to go away for two weeks of special training a year.

But the rest of the time, they live like normal civilians -- with families and scholarships and jobs.

"I have policemen, I have sheriff's deputies, I have some construction workers," Williams said of the careers of his part-time soldiers. "I've even got a NASA scientist."

Jessica Jones, 23, is a student at Texas Southern University. Her mother, Elaine Jones, said the call-up was not something her daughter expected.

"We just tell her to keep her head up and keep her faith in God," the mother said.

Reservists cannot decline to serve when called up for combat.

The soldiers note that they have had months to get themselves ready, since President Bush has let it be known that he might choose to strike Iraq.

"We've been preparing for this," said Sgt. Roland Barbosa Jr., who held his young son, Roland Barbosa III. "We knew it was going to happen."

Williams and his wife, Denise, have two children, a daughter Katie, 4, and son James, 2. His wife teaches school two days a week and recently obtained her MBA degree, he said.

He admits it will be hard being away.

"But we're also excited," he said. "This is the opportunity we get to prove that we don't sit just around in our reserve centers and drink beer and tell stories."

Reporter Rad Sallee contributed to this story.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:26PM

Edward Crain, M.D. for over half-century

By LUCAS WALL

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Edward Lillo Crain Jr., who practiced and taught medicine in Houston for more than five decades, died Saturday. He was 85.

"He was the most wonderful doctor and had received during his career the medal for being the best internist in the country at the time," said his wife, Freddy, to whom he had been married for 12 years.

Crain was born July 9, 1917, in Houston. He attended high school here, then earned his bachelor's degree at Princeton University in New Jersey. He went on to medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, following in his great-grand-father's footsteps.

After a brief internship and residency at Roosevelt Hospital in New York, Crain joined the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1943 and was sent to the Pacific theater of World War II as a Marine Corps medic. He earned numerous decorations for his work treating wounded soldiers, including the Navy Cross and Silver Star. He was honored with a Purple Heart after being wounded in action.

After the war, he returned to Houston and set up a medical practice with a colleague. Crain worked there for about 50 years, also teaching at Baylor College of Medicine and Methodist Hospital.

He ended his career with Aramco, then donated his services in retirement to the San Jose Clinic.

The hospital honored Crain's departure with a plaque, his wife said, that reads: "For excellence in medical care and constant compassion, commitment to outstanding patient care and service, for integrity, exceptional skills, and exemplary personal and professional ethics, and for serving as a role model and inspiration to the hospital's medical staff and employees."

Crain's parents were responsible for steering him into medicine, his wife said.

"His first thoughts were that he would like to be a missionary and his mother and father directed him toward medicine although he didn't realize it," she said. "They didn't want to see him go to China. That's what he thought he wanted to do. They directed him in that way, and it was his lifelong passion."

One of his proudest achievements, she said, was helping found the Texas Medical Center library. Crain

also raised funds for a garden at Methodist Hospital that honors his late wife and mother.

Freddy Crain said her husband loved teaching and took pride when "all these doctors would come up to him and say, 'Without your training, we couldn't be doing the good work we are.' "

In addition to his wife, Crain is survived by two daughters, Annie and Elizabeth Allred; two sons, Danny and Gene; two stepdaughters, Dianne Davis and Carolyn Alexander; and 10 grandchildren.

Visitation is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today at Geo. H. Lewis & Sons, 1010 Bering. Services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 3471 Westheimer.

Deaths elsewhere

Gertrude Janeway, the last widow of a Union veteran from the Civil War, Jan. 17, of undisclosed causes, in the Blaine, Tenn., log cabin where she lived most of her life. She was 93.

John L. "Jack" Dales, who as executive secretary for the Screen Actors Guild pioneered the effort to get residuals for actors, Jan. 16, of a cerebral hemorrhage, in Los Angeles. He was 95.

Jesse Edmisten, who served in World War I and received a Purple Heart, Jan. 17, of undisclosed cause, in Lexington, Neb. He was 109.

Harivanshrai Bachchan, renowned Hindi poet and father of Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan, Jan. 18, of undisclosed cause, in Bombay, India. He was 96.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:53PM

Two men sought in kidnap, sexual assault of woman

This week's Crime Stoppers report involves the kidnapping and sexual assault of a woman as she walked through her apartment complex in southeast Houston.

The woman approached the parking lot driveway of the apartment complex in the 200 block of El Dorado at about 2 p.m. on Nov. 20. A car, possibly a beige 1980s model four-door Oldsmobile with shiny low-rider wheels and white rosary beads on the rearview mirror, sped past her.

The car then turned around and drove up behind the victim. The driver stopped suddenly, and a passenger (shown in the composite) opened the back door and grabbed the victim, dragging her into the back seat of the car.

The woman was beaten and sexually assaulted while being driven around in the car. She was able to escape her kidnappers after kicking her assailant in the groin. She got out of the car and fled on foot.

The driver is described as a thin black male, 17 to 20 years old, with light skin, a short black fade haircut, moustache and goatee, and wearing a white muscle shirt with an old ring on his right hand.

The passenger is described as a heavy-set Hispanic male, 22 to 29 years old, about 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing 180 to 240 pounds, with thick glasses, short black hair combed forward and a moustache. He wore a white tank-top T-shirt with Ralph Lauren jeans and had two peace dove tattoos on his left arm.

Anyone with information should contact Officer Julie Hardin at the Houston Police Department's Sex Crimes Unit at 713-308-1170 or Crime Stoppers at 713-222-8477. Crime Stoppers will pay up to \$5,000 for information leading to an arrest and charges in this crime or any other felony.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:25PM

Ex-staffers rip Crooked E to shreds

A survey by the Severed Enron Employees Coalition makes official what everyone suspected -- the vast majority of former workers thought the made-for-TV movie, *The Crooked E: The Unshredded Truth about Enron*, was dreadful.

Of nearly 200 SEEC members who responded to an e-mail survey, 58 percent found the CBS movie, which aired Jan. 5, offensive and insulting. Another 36 percent said it was trash and that former employees should just forget it. Only 6 percent said they liked the movie. And 14 members said they didn't tune in.

The movie told the purported story of Brian Cruver, a young trader who initially swallows whole Enron Corp.'s emphasis on deal-making and bonuses until it begins to cost him his soul. It was loosely based on Cruver's book.

When traders aren't putting together dubious deals in the movie, they are ogling surgically enhanced Enron women clad in mini-skirts, some of whom are former strippers.

SEEC Chairman Rod Jordan said, "I guess that I worked in the wrong places at Enron. I did not see any strippers, bimbos or wild parties. However, I also did not see any of the corruption, greed, and illegal offshore deals going on. So, who knows, maybe there were many Enrons within Enron."

Another person who took part in the survey wrote, "There was no need to hire all the topless dancers in Canada to be in the movie."

And several SEEC members were concerned that unsophisticated viewers would fail to realize the movie was a Hollywood-ization of the Enron story. "Unfortunately, 99 percent of viewers around the country who watched the movie believed it," one wrote.

Several former Enronites defended the flick. "I believe that it accurately portrayed the mind-set of the hundreds of insiders that exploited the company and its shareholders for their own gain," one wrote.

"I don't feel that the movie portrayed ALL women as slinky ex-dancers, so those women who are offended should just get over it," another wrote.

Penelope Spheeris, who directed *The Crooked E*, shrugged off criticism about the movie's treatment of women.

"I had to call you because I told my boyfriend there was an issue about this. And he said that we made the women look pretty good. `What are they complaining about?' ," Spheeris said with a laugh.

-- **Bill Murphy**

HISD gives event parking an F

Hundreds should have gotten tardy slips Tuesday for arriving late to HISD Superintendent Kaye Stripling's State of the Schools luncheon at Reliant Center.

But it wasn't their fault.

Many with \$40 tickets for the luncheon spent as much as an hour waiting just to park inside Reliant Park.

Some 2,100 people had made reservations for the event, but the company that manages Reliant Park had opened just one gate to admit the long line of cars that snaked down Kirby Drive, turned the corner and stretched along the Loop 610 South feeder lane.

Shea Guinn, president of SMG Reliant Park, said one open gate on Kirby Drive can normally handle a crowd of 2,100. But he said the parking department was caught by surprise when about 2,000 additional people showed up for a meeting connected with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

"Obviously, there was a breakdown between both of those events, and we are extremely sorry that people had to wait in line to get through," Guinn said.

HISD Board President Kevin Hoffman got an earful about the parking problem, especially since he is the chief administrative officer of the Harris County Sports and Convention Corp., which operates Reliant Park.

During the luncheon, Hoffman was at the same table as Jonathan Day, an attorney representing the school district's business supporters. At some point, Hoffman said, Day leaned over and asked if he could get someone to open more gates so people could get out faster than they got in.

"With that," Hoffman said, "I put on my other hat and made a request to the operators to do that, and they were able to resolve it."

-- **Melanie Markley, education beat**

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:25PM

Houston's International Scene

By MAE GHALWASH
Special to the Chronicle

Group to get taste of culinary history

Fascinated first in 1973 by the clay models and authentic remnants of bread, beans and cucumbers in the Egyptian National Museum in Cairo, Egypt, Merriane Timko is now sharing her passion for the culinary history of ancient Egypt and Greece by starting a group that will explore the culinary histories of the Mediterranean.

Studying culinary histories "is a way to understand other cultures. The media focuses on ... conflicts, but I see a unifying factor in culinary history," Timko said.

Timko envisions the Mediterranean Culinary Historians of Houston as researching topics such as foods that were sacred to ancient Egyptian gods, the impact that the vegetables of the New World had on Europe and the origins of pasta. She expects some lively debates, such as over the origins of baklava. Is it Greek, Ottoman or Egyptian?

The group also will pursue other activities like developing a chronology of important culinary dates, tracing the origins of recipes and even mimicking some ancient recipes possibly for the market.

Two annual dinners of ancient Mediterranean foods will be held and possibly trips to the region as well.

Timko views culinary history as an important factor in history itself. It helps unravel the routes of trade merchants, like the travelers that passed through the region from India, Africa and Asia. It even tells the routes of great conquerors such as Alexander the Great, who returned to the Mediterranean from the Far East with rice, Timko said.

Timko has spent a lifetime pursuing her passions, earning a master's degree from the University of Michigan in Ancient Egyptian studies, independently studying Ancient Greek art and volunteering to work with two Houston Museums, giving lectures and arranging banquets that featured ancient foods and trips to the region.

The group will hold an organizational meeting at 3 p.m. Sunday at Central Market, 3815 Westheimer in the Community Room. Call Timko at 713-839-1373.

International calendar

- **Saudi Arabia/Iran:** Crispin Hawes, director of the Middle East Practice, Eurasia Group, will give an assessment of the political risks in investing in the energy sectors of Saudi Arabia and Iran at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday at the St. Regis, 1919 Briar Oaks Lane. Reservations are required. Call Rachael Mark at 646-424-2512.
- **Ireland:** Charles Sheehan, Irish consul general in Chicago, will address the annual general business meeting of the Irish Society with a talk on how Irish studies in universities relate to contemporary Ireland. He also will discuss the political and economic situations in Ireland. The talk starts at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Scanlan Room, the Jerabeck Center at the University of St. Thomas campus, 4000 Mount Vernon. For information, call the Center for Irish Studies at 713-525-3592.
- **Japan:** Louis Katz, professor of ceramics at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, will discuss the history of Japanese pottery at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the Wells-Fargo Plaza Lobby, 1000 Louisiana. His talk will kick off the opening reception of a traveling exhibition of Japanese pottery, which includes the work of some of Japan's most promising ceramic artists. The exhibition runs through Feb. 21. For information, call the Japanese Consulate at 713-652-2977, ext. 120.
- **Australia/New Zealand:** The Australian American Chamber of Commerce and the Australian-New Zealand Organization of Texas will host an event to commemorate Australia and New Zealand Day that will include dinner and Australian entertainment at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Braeburn Country Club, 8101 Bissonnet. Reservations are required by Thursday. Call Rose Lanham at the AACC at 281-496-3165.
- **Afghanistan:** Angela Howard, a professor of Asian art at Rutgers University, will discuss "Visions and Miracles Among the Monastic Communities of Kucha in Central Asia" at 5 p.m. Saturday at the Brown Auditorium Theater, Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet. For information, call 713-639-7000.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:25PM

Area briefs

Three-vehicle wreck on Beltway kills woman

A northwest Houston woman was killed in a three-car wreck early Sunday on the Beltway.

The 54-year-old victim died at the scene about 3:15 a.m. when a Toyota collided head-on with a Ford Crown Victoria heading east in the westbound lanes of the 7300 block of E. Beltway 8 North.

The Ford then struck an Isuzu SUV, also heading west, before leaving the scene.

The victim's husband and a passenger in the Ford were taken by Life Flight to Memorial Hermann Hospital.

The SUV driver was taken to East Houston Regional Hospital, Harris County Sheriff's officials said.

Sheriff's investigators were attempting to notify the woman's kin late Sunday.

Loud-music argument leads to fatal stabbing

A dispute over loud music turned deadly Saturday night when a man stabbed his roommate, who died about five minutes later in the parking lot of their apartment complex.

Luis Bautista Hernandez, 29, was killed about 8:30 p.m. at the Versailles Apartments, 8001 Fulton.

The dispute over the music began inside the home, then moved outside. It escalated until Hernandez's roommate pulled a knife and stabbed him in the chest, Houston police said.

Hernandez staggered several feet and then collapsed in the parking lot, police said.

The 21- or 22-year-old assailant, sporting a short blond Mohawk hairstyle and wearing a white jogging suit, fled on foot, police said.

Jan. 19, 2003, 7:22PM

Home ownership becoming easier for 20somethings

By MARTHA IRVINE

Associated Press

CHICAGO -- Record-low interest rates are prompting people in their early 20s to do something they hadn't thought possible at their age: buy homes.

Erin Engelke was a fresh-faced college graduate when she and her husband, Jason, bought their first home, a townhouse in Edmond, Okla. They've since bought another three-bedroom house and rent the townhouse to college students. She's 24. He's 25.

Cristi Cola recently moved into a little two-bedroom house in Safety Harbor, Fla. -- "just perfect for a single girl like me," the 23-year-old says.

And Jeff Lischett, also 23, used his signing bonus and a salary advance from Kraft Foods to fill out the down payment he'd started saving while living with his dad after graduating from college. He'll be moving into his new two-bedroom, two-bath townhouse in suburban Chicago this month.

"Most people my age realize that renting is silly when you think about it," says Lischett who got a 5 percent interest rate that makes his monthly mortgage payments comparable to what he would've paid in rent.

"And living at home for a couple years to save money isn't as frowned upon anymore," he says. "You're no longer the loser living in the basement."

While Lischett was able to come up with his own 10 percent down payment, many buyers his age are getting help from parents or grandparents. Still others are taking advantage of deals -- prompted by a hot buying market -- for 5 percent down payments or even those that require no money down.

The current climate is making it possible for some young people to buy "even in New York City," says Ellen Bitton, CEO of Park Avenue Mortgage Group.

She says most homebuyers 25 and younger are seeking loans nationwide in the ballpark of \$130,000 to \$350,000.

Real estate industry statistics show the impact.

The median age of the first-time homebuyer has been dropping -- from age 32 in 1999 to 31 in 2001, according to a survey done every other year by the National Association of Realtors. And transactions from the under-25 crowd rose from 305,192 in 1999 to 321,136 two years later. Overall, there were 2.85 million first-time buyer transactions in 1999 and 3.09 million in 2001.

Although it's creating headaches for apartment landlords in some cities who rely on 20somethings for rent, experts say financially stable young people who buy property have an unprecedented opportunity to get loans at record-low rates and to begin building equity earlier than some of their parents did.

"Homes for these young families are not just a place for them to lay their heads at night. These are little prosperity factories," says Scott Syphax, CEO of the Nehemiah Corporation of California, a nonprofit organization that provides homebuyers with down payment assistance.

The trend is causing some real estate agents to target young buyers. Other agents say savvy 20somethings are coming to them.

"They're not going for the flash. They're not going for the fancy cars. They're going for the real estate," says Honore Frumentino, a broker in Deerfield, Ill.

Of course, real estate is not a surefire investment. And for those who graduate from college saddled with hefty student loans and credit card bills, getting deeper in debt may not be the right move.

Some young buyers also admit that making monthly mortgage payments is not always easy.

Teha Kennard says money's been tight, but in a good way.

"Now that I am in debt, I am very aware of my finances," says the 24-year-old, who bought a condo in Washington. "I am also more focused on saving."

Jan. 19, 2003, 7:21PM

Earned income tax credit fails to reach potential, study says

By ALBERT B. CRENSHAW
Washington Post

The earned income tax credit, a key federal assistance program for low-income workers, is failing to achieve its full potential because many eligible people don't claim it and because too much of the benefit is eaten up by fees to tax-return preparation services and high-cost "refund anticipation" loans, a study says.

The study, by Alan Berube of the Brookings Institution's Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, found that in 27 urban and rural areas around the country, 2 million families got more than \$3.4 billion in refunds on the earned income tax credit in 2000, raising the income of working families by an average of \$1,700, or 13 percent.

But it also found that in 1999, tax-preparation fees and refund-anticipation loans ate up \$212 million of the credit's benefits in those areas.

An average of 38 percent of the credit earners opted for a refund anticipation loan, and in some areas more than half did.

The loans, offered by many banks and other financial institutions, in effect give the taxpayers their refunds immediately -- minus a fee.

This may seem cheap to the taxpayer, but the duration of the loan is likely to be only a few days or weeks, so that the fees -- which averaged \$100, the study found -- would be astronomical if calculated as an annual percentage interest rate.

The high costs of the loan and return preparation are "an example of a market failure that ends up eroding the intended benefits of sound tax policy," said Douglas Nelson, president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which is backing a national campaign to improve the reach and effectiveness of the earned income tax credit.

Jan. 19, 2003, 9:16PM

Plan to eliminate estate tax attracts unlikely opposition

By MARILYN GEEWAX
Cox News Service

WASHINGTON -- While President Bush is shining the spotlight on his \$674 billion tax-cut plan, he's also pushing another expensive proposal that would help the wealthiest Americans: permanent elimination of the estate tax.

Only those with legacies exceeding \$1 million would benefit, but the strongest opposition is coming from some of the nation's richest citizens.

Bill Gates Sr., father of America's wealthiest man, launched a lobbying campaign last week, saying elimination of the estate tax would worsen budget deficits, widen the income gap and undermine democracy by letting a small number of families become too wealthy and powerful.

"This is a tax which is imposed on very, very few Americans," said Gates, co-chairman of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation set up by his son, a co-founder of Microsoft Corp.

The wealthy individuals who pay it worked hard and were perhaps even ingenious, Gates said. But they were able to become millionaires because they were "born in a country that has an Army and a Navy that protects them. They were born in a country which has an orderly market" and "a police force and a court system."

The government must collect taxes, he said, and the estate tax is "absolutely the most progressive element" of the tax code.

Gates is working with Responsible Wealth, a Boston-based group that has been circulating a petition among wealthy families to urge Congress not to end the estate tax. Among the billionaires on board are media mogul Ted Turner, investor Warren Buffett, retired banker David Rockefeller Sr. and financier George Soros.

Under current law, the estate tax is levied on bequests of more than \$1 million, with a maximum rate of 49 percent. By 2009, the exemption slowly rises to \$3.5 million, while the top tax rate slips to 45 percent. And in 2010, the estate tax disappears entirely.

But the phase-out will "sunset" in 2011, and the estate tax will come back in full force, restoring the \$1 million exemption and the 55 percent top rate it had in 2001.

Permanent elimination of the estate tax was not part of the strategy Bush announced for spurring the economy, but the president said he would work for that outcome separately.

Last year, the GOP-led House voted 274-154 to repeal estate, gift and related taxes by 2011, but the Democratic-led Senate took no action. With Republicans now in control of the Senate as well, Bush hopes to get the legislation passed this spring.

Opponents of the estate tax say its return in 2011 would threaten family farms and small-business owners. They argue that the tax makes it cheaper for an entrepreneur or farmer to sell a business before dying and pay the capital gains tax than to pass it on to their children.

Among the most vocal tax opponents have been newspaper owners, who say heavy estate taxes make it difficult for family-owned papers to avoid having to issue stock to the public or sell out to large chains.

Cox Enterprises, a family-controlled company that owns Cox Newspapers, lobbies for a permanent reduction in estate tax rates but not its complete elimination.

"The excessive top rate must be permanently reduced to a more manageable level," said Alexander V. Netchvolodoff, Cox's vice president of public policy. "This will permit the company, on behalf of its employees and its owners, to remain as a functioning tax-paying whole."

Gates and his supporters counter that only three out of every 10,000 Americans leave a taxable estate in which a business is the majority of the estate. They argue that the estate tax affects only the wealthiest 2 percent of all Americans, while generating \$27.5 billion in government revenues last year.

In coming decades, as people who amassed fortunes during the stock market boom of the 1980s and 1990s start to die, they could pass more than \$136 trillion to their heirs. Estate tax supporters say that permanent repeal would cost at least \$796 billion in lost tax revenues between 2012 and 2022.

Many governors also oppose elimination of the estate tax as states face steep revenue declines. As the tax phases out, states stand to lose an estimated \$16 billion from 2003 to 2007, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal-leaning research group in Washington.

Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., appeared at a news conference recently with Gates to argue that elimination of the estate tax would have a devastating impact as the government tries to absorb the costs for retiring baby boomers.

By 2016, "the Medicare Trust Fund goes cash negative, and in 2017 the Social Security Trust Fund goes cash negative," Conrad said. If Congress were to permanently eliminate estate taxes this year, it would

have to raise other taxes or cut spending dramatically to balance the budget in coming years, Conrad said.

Gates said estate taxes are not only crucial to helping pay for government but also are needed by universities, libraries and other institutions because the estate tax encourages people to make charitable contributions to reduce their tax burdens.

Jan. 19, 2003, 7:18PM

Marriage penalty part myth, fact

When numbers crunched, singles come up shortest

By EDMUND L. ANDREWS
New York Times

WASHINGTON -- If politicians of almost every stripe agree so readily about an issue, it is usually worth a closer look.

Such is the case with an important -- but barely debated -- component of President Bush's \$674 billion tax-cut plan: relief from the "marriage penalty."

It is hard to find an idea with more mom-and-apple-pie appeal.

Who wants to be against marriage? Who wants to be for higher taxes? Who would defend a tax burden that seems both unfair and capricious, a result of anomalies in the law?

As any two-income married couple knows, the marriage penalty kicks in when they combine their incomes on a joint tax return and suddenly find themselves in a much higher bracket. A couple earning \$80,000 owes several thousand dollars more than two singles who each earn \$40,000.

Small wonder that Democrats, who have attacked Bush's overall plan as reckless and overwhelmingly tilted toward the rich, have said virtually nothing about plans to alleviate this problem.

But for all the complaints about the marriage penalty, the current tax code is in many ways heavily biased in favor of married couples, especially those with children.

Tens of millions of families actually receive big marriage bonuses, which would become even bigger under Bush's plan.

Consider the tax loads of three different households, each with an annual taxable income of \$60,000.

In a recent analysis prepared by accounting firm Deloitte & Touche, a single person with no children would owe \$7,943 under current law and receive a tax cut of \$345 under Bush's plan.

By contrast, a married couple with two children filing jointly would pay \$3,300 under current law and

\$2,400 under the Bush plan. Did someone say marriage penalty?

Defenders point out that the married couple has more mouths to feed, more clothes to buy and more house to pay for. But consider the third household: a single mother with one child. She would have to shoulder child care expenses that a married couple with a stay-at-home mom would not. Yet she would owe \$1,800 more than the married couple under current law, and her tax cut would be about half that of the married couple.

The big winners under current law and the Bush plan are the Ozzies and Harriets -- married couples with only one breadwinner and two or more children.

Two-income married couples are in some respects the biggest victims of the marriage penalty, and their problems do not disappear under the Bush plan.

Single people pay the highest taxes of all, under current law and the Bush plan, though a single person earning \$60,000 may still end up paying less than a husband and wife who both earn the same amount.

There are technical reasons behind all this, but they seem to stem from a surprisingly intense political battle waged by influential conservative groups determined to encourage stay-at-home moms.

"The people who are treated the best are families with stay-at-home spouses, who, not surprisingly, are an important constituency for Republicans," said Edward J. McCaffery, a law professor at the University of Southern California and the author of *Taxing Women* (University of Chicago Press).

As for two-income couples, "the more equal they are as earners, the higher the penalty will be," he added.

One big reason for the larger tax burden may be the role played over the years by Phyllis Schlafly, founder of the Eagle Forum and the indefatigable foe of feminism and of anything in the tax code that encourages women to leave their children for outside work.

Schlafly has pushed for child tax credits, which are given for each child in the family and would be increased to \$1,000 from \$600, and opposed tax breaks for the costs of child care, which are not being expanded.

She has fought for years to ensure that marriage-penalty relief flows to families with stay-at-home moms as well as two-income households.

Bush's plan would raise the standard deduction for any married couple. When he proposed a special 10 percent tax break for two-income families in his 2001 tax bill, Schlafly raised a storm and helped kill the idea.

"Giving a tax cut only to two-earner couples would send the radical feminist message that the government sees no value in a homemaker's work at home," Schlafly wrote at the time, urging her supporters to write and call Republicans on the House Ways and Means Committee.

The upshot is good news for the Harriet Nelsons of the country, unless, of course, Harriet decides to make some money herself.

Jan. 19, 2003, 9:41PM

Grandmaster beats rival for U.S. chess title

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE -- With a stunning queen sacrifice, Latvian-born Grandmaster Alexander Shabalov of Pittsburgh defeated an up-and-coming rival to win the U.S. Chess Championship.

It took Shabalov 61 moves over almost six hours Saturday night to beat Varuzhan Akobian, 19, an Armenian who lives in Glendale, Calif., for the \$25,000 prize, the biggest in the tournament's history.

On Sunday, Anna Hahn, 26, of Jersey City, N.J., beat last year's top female finisher, 22-year-old Jennifer Shahade of New York City, and 19-year-old New York University student Irina Krush in a tie-breaking round of speed chess to take home the \$12,500 women's championship.

Shabalov, 35, had twice tied for the title -- in 1993 and 2000 -- but this was his first outright championship. He could have clinched first place with a win or a draw Friday night, but he lost to Joel Benjamin of New York.

Shabalov celebrated victory Saturday night with a paper cup of Scotch. "All I needed yesterday was a draw, but I lost, so I was pretty angry with myself. I just decided I was going to do whatever I needed to do," he said.

Last year's winner, Larry Christiansen of Cambridge, Mass., tied with four other players for third place.

Shabalov, playing with the white pieces, tested Akobian with an aggressive opening. By midgame, Akobian found himself in time trouble. Shabalov took an advantage by sacrificing his queen on the 56th move; Akobian resigned five moves later.

It was still a breakout tournament for Akobian, who has played strong chess for the past year. Most notably, he won the World Open in Philadelphia last summer.

The finish capped a tense tournament, which entered its ninth and final round Saturday with eight players, including five former champions, tied for the lead with 5.5 points apiece. Those eight were matched against each other in the top four games Saturday.

A tie at the end of the day would have resulted in an overtime round of speed chess on Sunday -- a high-

stakes proposition, with tens of thousands of dollars on the line. Nevertheless, six of the players decided that they would take their chances with that, and they quickly agreed to draw their games.

The strategy backfired when Shabalov and Akobian decided to go for it all. Because a win is worth one point while a draw is only worth half, the winner of the Shabalov-Akobian match would take the title; if they had drawn in the end, the tournament would have gone on to the high-speed blitz round.

On the Internet: America's Federation for Chess: www.af4c.org

Jan. 19, 2003, 8:18PM

National briefs

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Suspected ringleader of kidnapping arrested

HARTFORD, Conn. -- The suspected ringleader behind the kidnapping of a Connecticut multimillionaire has been taken into custody in Canada, the FBI said Sunday.

Renaldo Rose, 23, a former Marine, was arrested Saturday night in Toronto on an immigration charge, said FBI spokeswoman Lisa Bull.

Authorities believe Rose led a group of four who abducted Edward Lampert, the chairman of ESL Investments Inc., from a parking garage in Greenwich on Jan. 10. Lampert was released unharmed two days later.

Three people were arrested there Jan. 12. All three are being held without bail.

Eastern Kentucky's need for narcotics questioned

LEXINGTON, Ky. -- Drugstores, hospitals and other legal drug outlets in eastern Kentucky received more prescription painkillers per capita than anywhere else in the nation from 1998 to 2001, according to a report.

Nearly half a ton of narcotics reached six small mountain counties during that span -- the equivalent of three-quarters of a pound for every adult who lives there, according to a story Sunday in the Lexington Herald-Leader, which used an analysis of Drug Enforcement Administration data.

"I can't imagine that Kentucky has any more pain than Detroit has. There's something going on," said April Vallerand, an assistant professor at Detroit's Wayne State University who serves on pain advisory panels.

The newspaper found that possession and trafficking charges for all controlled substances jumped 348 percent in eastern Kentucky from 1997 through 2001, while admissions of prescription-drug addicts to residential drug-treatment centers tripled from 1998 to 2001.

Dr. Philip Fisher, head of the Huntington, W.Va.-based Appalachian Pain Foundation, said that an area

with an older population, many injured coal miners and high rates of lung cancer might need large amounts of narcotics to treat legitimate pain sufferers.

Hearing on accidental bombing could end early

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. -- The military hearing into the accidental bombing of Canadian troops could conclude two days earlier than expected because the Air Force has scaled back its witness list.

David Beck, Maj. William Umbach's lawyer, said Sunday that the Air Force has scratched several of its planned witnesses.

Beck and Charles Gittins, Maj. Harry Schmidt's defense lawyer, will call witnesses and present evidence when the government finishes with its case.

Six injured as airplane strikes passenger jetway

NEW YORK -- An airplane struck a passenger jetway at LaGuardia Airport, injuring six airport workers Sunday.

The Northwest Airlines Airbus A319 was being moved from a parking area to a gate when it hit the jetway, causing the plane's landing gear to collapse, according to airline spokesman Kurt Ebenhoch.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:39PM

Hundreds of homes destroyed in Australian capital bush fire

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia -- Hundreds of people began sifting through the charred remains of their homes in Australia's capital on Sunday, after the worst wildfires in the city's history swept through suburbs, killing four people and forcing thousands to evacuate. More than 400 houses were destroyed, officials said.

"I have been to a lot of bush fire scenes in Australia ... but this is by far the worst," Prime Minister John Howard said Sunday.

Hospitals treated about 250 people for burns and the effects of smoke from the fires, which swept into Canberra on Saturday.

Many were residents who battled flames with garden hoses and buckets filled from swimming pools. A number of them reported no fire crews in their burning neighborhoods.

"We saw a few fire trucks coming down the street. But I think they must have thought, 'That one's a lost cause' and carried on to another house," said Phil Bates, a carpenter.

Fire crews admitted they were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the flames, but John Stanhope, Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory, defended emergency services against charges they were ill-prepared.

"This was an event of such enormity, of such force and such devastating power that it simply ran over the top of us," he said.

Police said a 61-year old man died of smoke inhalation while trying to save his house, and an 83-year-old woman died in her home. A 37-year-old woman was found dead at her burned-out home along with an unidentified body.

Fires were under control early Monday but officials said one blaze near the suburb of Belconnen posed a threat if winds pick up later in the day.

Firefighters bulldozed massive fire breaks on the outskirts of the city after weather forecasters said temperatures would reach 95 and winds would be strong.

Scorched pine plantations formed a landscape of blackened and skeletal trees. A mist of fine ash blew through the streets and thick smoke hung over the city of about 320,000 people, surrounded by drought-hit farmland and tinder-dry forests.

Electricity, lost to large parts of Canberra at the height of the emergency, had been restored by Monday to most of the city. However, water supplies were limited. Residents were asked not to shower or wash clothes.

Conditions were forecast to worsen Monday and Tuesday with temperatures and wind speeds picking up. No rain was forecast for the week.

Extra police patrolled the city after reports of looting and suspicions of arson, said Canberra police chief John Murray. One man was arrested and charged with stealing.

Most of the fires were sparked a week ago by lightning in a nearby national park. Strong, dry Outback winds and soaring temperatures in Canberra's outer suburbs triggered Saturday's havoc.

Howard interrupted his summer vacation to tour the fire-scorched suburbs, where residents described the speed of the fires.

"We just got a few precious things out and the family dog and within two minutes the house was just gone," Tony Walter told Howard. "It just exploded."

Damages were expected to run into hundreds of millions of dollars. Besides homes, the fires consumed medical centers, schools and thousands of acres of pine forests, said chief minister Stanhope.

Many firefighters lost their homes and possessions while fighting blazes elsewhere, he said. The Stromlo Observatory, a historic telescope and science center on a hill outside the city, was also destroyed.

People who lost their homes will be given \$5,800 to buy emergency supplies and clothing, and the city will seek alternative housing.

The mood among many residents turned to anger by Monday as some reported that no fire crews came to their burning streets on Saturday, and emergency services admitted they were overwhelmed by the ferocity and magnitude of the flames.

Stanhope sought to ease tensions by announcing a full inquiry.

More than 1,000 people were still in evacuation centers Sunday and people were warned not to return to their homes because of the danger of more fires and explosions caused by gas leaks.

The city also faced a looming environmental crisis: Its main sewage plant was damaged in the fire and was expected to overflow into a local river in about a day if it was not fixed.

Australia is in the grip of a yearlong drought that has left much of the countryside parched and vulnerable to fire. Once fires start, they roar through dry undergrowth and into oil-filled eucalyptus trees, creating infernos that are all but impossible to put out.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:03AM

World briefs

Purported statement by bin Laden printed

CAIRO, Egypt -- A statement purportedly written by Osama bin Laden urges Muslims to stop fighting each other and unite against the "crusader coalition" that is attacking the Islamic world, according to excerpts published Sunday in a London-based Arab newspaper. Asharq Al-Awsat printed portions of a 26-page statement it claims was written and signed by bin Laden, leader of the al-Qaida terror group. The letter did not mention any nation, but earlier statements have accused the United States and Israel of launching a religious crusade against the Muslim world.

Renowned French journalist dies at 86

PARIS -- Francoise Giroud, who co-founded one of France's top news magazines and became a powerful force in French postwar journalism at a time when few women were in the business, died Sunday at age 86. Giroud, also a novelist and a former Cabinet minister, died at the American Hospital outside Paris, where she had been treated for a head injury after a fall, said Le Nouvel Observateur magazine.

U.S. lauds Kuwait for terror arrest

KUWAIT CITY -- The United States on Sunday praised Kuwait for detaining a Kuwaiti soldier on charges of spying for Iraq and said the arrest proves that Saddam Hussein remains a threat to Iraq's oil-rich southern neighbor. A well-connected Kuwaiti newspaper reported this weekend that the alleged spy, Sgt. Mohammed Hamad al-Juwayed of the Kuwaiti National Guards, was working on plans to poison a large number of American soldiers as well as assassinate Kuwaiti politicians and blow up oil and power facilities.

Cubans go to polls; dissidents cry farce

HAVANA -- President Fidel Castro and millions of other Cubans voted Sunday in parliamentary elections in which all 609 candidates ran uncontested. Many Cuban dissidents labeled the vote a farce and refused to participate. State television showed Castro voting in the eastern city of Santiago, where he traditionally casts his ballot. He later told reporters the island's dissident movement had been manufactured by the United States.

Chavez gives threats on food raids, talks

CARACAS, Venezuela -- President Hugo Chavez on Sunday threatened to order more raids on striking private food producers and warned the government may abandon negotiations with opponents trying to force him from office. Meanwhile, thousands of Venezuelans with roots in Italy, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Portugal and other countries marched for peace, waving the flags of their homelands and Venezuela. Some carried signs that read "liberty" and "union" in six languages.

Australians check wildfire devastation

CANBERRA, Australia -- Hundreds of people began sifting through the charred remains of their homes in Australia's capital on Sunday after the worst wildfires in the city's history swept through suburbs, killing four people and forcing thousands to evacuate. Nearly 400 houses were destroyed, officials said.

Houston Chronicle News Services

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:11AM

Bucs erase past playoff demons with convincing win over Eagles

By JOHN McCLAIN

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PHILADELPHIA -- Unlike Napoleon against the British at Waterloo, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers finally conquered the Eagles at Philadelphia.

After being eliminated from the playoffs the last two years at Veterans Stadium, the Bucs shocked the favored Eagles 27-10 in the NFC Championship Game on Sunday to earn their first trip to the Super Bowl.

"This is probably the greatest day of my life," said Tampa Bay coach Jon Gruden. "We beat a great team. It's kind of like the *The Wizard of Oz*. Ding dong, the witch is dead."

Ignited by cornerback Ronde Barber, who returned an interception for a touchdown, registered a sack and forced a fumble, Tampa Bay's No. 1-ranked defense suffocated the Eagles with an overpowering performance.

"I remember being called the Yuccaneers," defensive tackle Warren Sapp said, recalling when the Bucs finished 6-10 in 1996 in Tony Dungy's first season as coach. "That's when it turned around for me and (outside linebacker) Derrick Brooks.

"We said, 'Hey, we've got to do something about this. This ain't right. It's just not right to be called the Yuccaneers.' It took us awhile, but we finally did something about it."

And now the Yuccaneers are going to San Diego for Super Bowl XXXVII.

Not often does a team rush for 49 yards and win by 17 points, but that's what happened to the Bucs before 66,713 frigid, frustrated fans, most of whom headed for the exits after Barber's 92-yard touchdown return of a Donovan McNabb pass secured the victory with 3:12 remaining.

"We were driving down the field, and we got close, and I took a three-step drop, but he (Barber) undercut the route," McNabb said. "All of a sudden, you see him running the other way. You don't believe it's actually happening, but it is."

Quarterback Brad Johnson helped Tampa Bay overcome its wretched running game against a Philadelphia defense that was the second-toughest to score on this season behind the Bucs.

Johnson completed 20 of 33 passes for 259 yards, including a nine-yard touchdown pass to Keyshawn Johnson. He threw one interception on his sixth pass of the game, but the Bucs' defense made sure it didn't hurt.

Brad Johnson outplayed McNabb. Hamstrung by a conservative approach until the Eagles were forced to play catch-up out of desperation, McNabb was 26-of-49 for 243 yards and one interception.

"I played poorly," McNabb said. "I'm very critical of myself, and I didn't get the job done."

Sunday's victory sets up a Super Bowl XXXVII confrontation between Gruden and his former team, the Oakland Raiders.

After last season, Raiders owner Al Davis let Gruden out of his contract to move across the country when Tampa Bay gave Oakland two No. 1 draft choices, two No. 2 picks and \$8 million.

The most expensive coach in NFL history has been worth every penny. The Bucs set a franchise record for victories, broke a four-game losing streak to the Eagles, won their first playoff game on the road and will be playing in a Super Bowl for the first time in the franchise's 27-year history.

The last football game at Veterans Stadium turned out to be one of the most disappointing in Eagles history. Favored to beat Tampa Bay for the fourth time at home in three seasons, Philadelphia lost the NFC Championship Game for the second year in a row.

Gruden and Eagles coach Andy Reid were assistant coaches at Green Bay under Mike Holmgren. Gruden left the Packers to become the Eagles' offensive coordinator before Oakland hired him.

Gruden and Reid entered the game tied for the NFL's best record (34-14) since the start of the 2000 season. Reid may have been voted NFL Coach of the Year, but Gruden now has one more victory.

"There's been a buzz around our place ever since he got to Tampa," Brad Johnson said. "I love playing for the guy. He's fun to be around, and it's contagious."

Gruden boasts another statistic that warms the hearts of Buccaneers fans everywhere: He's 2-0 this season when game-time temperature is 40 degrees or less. Before Gruden was hired, the Bucs were 0-21 under those conditions.

At kickoff Sunday, the temperature was 26, with a wind chill of 16.

The Bucs spotted the Eagles a 7-0 lead. Brian Mitchell returned the opening kickoff 70 yards to the Tampa Bay 26, and Duce Staley ran twice, including a 20-yard touchdown on his second carry.

The Eagles made it look easy early, but the Bucs made it hard in the end. Philadelphia scored one more time on a 30-yard field goal by David Akers in the second quarter.

Down 7-0, Tampa Bay scored for the first time on Martin Gramatica's 48-yard field goal. Then it went on a 96-yard touchdown drive that was so un-Bucs-like.

Receiver Joe Jurevicius, who missed practice last week after his first child was born prematurely and who didn't arrive until late Saturday, caught a short pass from Brad Johnson and turned it into a 71-yard gain to the Philadelphia five. Two plays later, Mike Alstott scored on a one-yard run for a 10-7 lead.

After Akers' field goal made it 10-10, the Bucs went 80 yards in 12 plays. Keyshawn Johnson caught three passes for 40 yards, including the nine-yard touchdown catch for a 17-10 advantage the Bucs refused to surrender.

The second half belonged to the Bucs' defense, and Tampa Bay took advantage of a 15-yard personal foul on Philadelphia rookie cornerback Sheldon Brown, who was called for interfering with Karl Williams' ability to field a punt. Gramatica's 27-yard field goal made it 20-10 with 1:02 left in the third quarter.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:19AM

Despair turns to joy for Buccaneers' Jurevicius

By FRAN BLINEBURY

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PHILADELPHIA -- Michael William Jurevicius didn't see his father gather in that quick slant over the middle from Brad Johnson in the first quarter. He didn't see the way his dad got a nice block from tight end Ken Dilger and sprung open through a huge hole. Or the way he pumped his arms, churned his legs and sprinted for all he was worth down the left sideline.

For one thing, the kid is only six days old. For another, he is in the neo-natal intensive care unit of a Tampa hospital, hooked up to all sorts of wires, tubes and contraptions that are keeping him alive after a birth that was several weeks premature and followed by pulmonary complications.

"He's a fighter," Tampa Bay's Joe Jurevicius said.

Wonder where he gets that.

Jurevicius never has been the fastest receiver on any team for which he's played, nor the guy with the slick moves that will make you drop your jaw and shake your head. He runs precise pass routes. He catches the ball. He makes the plays.

None of them bigger than his one reception Sunday, that little slice across the heart of the Eagles' defense that turned into a 71-yard gain and turned the NFC Championship Game on its head.

When the Tampa Bay Bucs were done shocking everybody outside their locker room with their 27-10 win, there were difference-makers in every nook and cranny of creaky, cranky, inconsolable Veterans Stadium, which had hosted its final football game.

There was cornerback Ronde Barber playing marvelous pass defense, coming up to help stop the run, forcing a fumble and making the clinching interception return for a touchdown. There was defensive end Simeon Rice keeping the pressure on Philadelphia quarterback Donovan McNabb all day. There was Johnson making enough right decisions and enough right throws all afternoon.

But if the long-suffering Tampa Bay franchise was going to advance to its first Super Bowl, then it was only fitting that the player who had to endure the most torturous week should point it in the right direction.

"I had gone from the highest moment of my life on Tuesday when my son was born, living on cloud nine, to a week that took me down and then up again like the world's biggest roller coaster," Jurevicius said. "One minute, I was so proud to be a father. The next minute, I have nurses and doctors pulling me aside and telling me that my son is in trouble."

The Bucs appeared to be in their usual trouble at the Vet when Brian Mitchell returned the opening kickoff 70 yards and two plays later Duce Staley ran 20 yards to give the Eagles a 7-0 lead.

Johnson threw an interception that gave the Eagles great field position. Then Eagles punter Lee Johnson pinned the Bucs on their four-yard line to start a drive. But on third-and-two, Brad Johnson found his target running free on the slant, and when Jurevicius had galloped all the way to the Eagles' five, everything out on the unforgiving turf and in the stands seemed to change. Mike Alstott plunged in for a TD, and the Bucs never again trailed.

"It's about confidence," Jurevicius said. "You make a play, and all of a sudden the whole team feels like anything is possible."

Especially when that play comes from a teammate who wasn't with the squad for practices or meetings all week, who flew into Philadelphia late Saturday afternoon. But one who barely doubted he would play.

"Sure, the thought crossed my mind maybe once or twice," Jurevicius said. "But once I knew that my wife (Megan) was out of the woods, when they told me that it looked like my son had improved, I was coming.

"It wasn't a question of 'Should I?' It was more like, 'This is what you have to do.' That was the message from my whole family. They all take a lot of pride in what I do, and they all wanted me to be here."

This was, of course, the last place the Bucs wanted to be, having been eliminated from the playoffs on the same field the previous two seasons and having lost here this season.

The Bucs were the team that never had won a postseason road game and carried a 1-21 overall record in games during which the temperature was below 40 degrees. And there they were at kickoff with the thermometer reading 25.

"There was such a chill in here before the game, and it had nothing to do with the weather," Jurevicius said. "I was received back by all these guys with high-fives and hugs, and you could just sense that something special was going to happen.

"It gets to a point in life where people keep saying you can't do something, so all that's left is to go out there and do something about it. You can't wait for fate to hit you."

No, that is strictly the dominion of Philadelphia fans, who know heartbreak like fish know water. They know Chico Ruiz stealing home to start the Phillies' end-of-season collapse in 1964. They know John Havlicek stealing the ball to beat the 76ers in 1966. They know Harold Carmichael getting called for illegal motion to wipe out a first-quarter touchdown and start a wipeout in the 1981 Super Bowl. The litany of devastating defeats goes on and on. They know everything about failure and opportunity lost. You know, the real important things, until a situation like Jurevicius' comes along.

How do you concentrate on your job when the only things that matter in life are in a hospital hundreds of miles away? How do you focus on reading defenses when your head is spinning, practically exploding with anxiety?

"Family is first, always will be," Jurevicius said. "But football is a big part of my life, and it is a way of letting out the frustration, the aggression that builds inside you.

"After a while, I needed to be out here. I needed to get hit. I needed to hit somebody. I needed to do something."

So all he did was pick up the Bucs and stand them on their feet.

"Now I can't wait to get home, to hug my wife, to give my son the biggest, happiest kiss," Jurevicius said. "My son is sick. There's still a long fight ahead for him. But I called the hospital today right before we came over to the field, and a nurse told me he was a fraction of an inch better, and that's all I needed to hear. He's given me a reason to believe."

Tough guy that little kid. And his dad.

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:48PM

Bucs' defense puts clamps on Eagles

By JOHN McCLAIN

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PHILADELPHIA -- The Buccaneers were leading 20-10 when the Eagles reached their 10-yard line with 3:27 left in the NFC Championship Game.

A touchdown by the Eagles, a clutch series by their defense, and Philadelphia would get back the ball with a chance to tie or win.

But Tampa Bay cornerback Ronde Barber crushed the Eagles' comeback attempt by stepping in front of receiver Antonio Freeman, intercepting Donovan McNabb's pass and returning it 92 yards for a touchdown.

"It was a quick slant, and I assumed Donovan figured we were coming with a blitz," Barber said after the 27-10 victory that secured Tampa Bay's first Super Bowl appearance. "He threw it right into the teeth of our defense, and it was a play I had to make.

"I'd be kicking myself for weeks if I hadn't made the interception. The interception was a bonus."

On Friday, Eagles' cornerback Troy Vincent said the defense that played best Sunday would win the game. He was right. Tampa Bay's league-leading defense outplayed the Eagles.

The Bucs forced three turnovers -- two by Barber, who also sacked McNabb and caused a fumble. Barber and his teammates on defense were able to overcome a quick 7-0 deficit that resulted from Brian Mitchell's 70-yard kickoff return and Duce Staley's 20-yard touchdown run.

"A touchdown at the beginning of the game is unacceptable," said Barber, who wasn't voted to the Pro Bowl. "But we're accustomed to tough situations. This is a smart, mature defense made up of veterans, and that kind of talent and experience pay dividends in situations like that."

The Eagles had 312 yards, including 80 rushing. They had 127 yards on their last three drives in the fourth quarter, 55 on their last two possessions.

"This win validated everything," said outside linebacker Derrick Brooks, the NFL Defensive Player of the Year. "We're going to the Super Bowl to win it and bring the (Vince Lombardi) trophy back to

Tampa."

The Bucs celebrated the end of their four-game losing streak to the Eagles, including three at Veterans Stadium. When it came to playoff games at the Vet, the third time really was a charm after being eliminated here the last two years.

"I was so happy at the end of the game that I may have gotten out of character," said Brooks, who plays under control and never loses his cool. "I got into it with a couple of fans. To see that crowd silenced was something I wish all Tampa fans could have been here to see. They saw it through our eyes, and to see that crowd silenced was something I'll always remember."

The Bucs shut down the Eagles' running game and seemed to confuse McNabb with a variety of looks. Defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin did another outstanding coaching job.

"You have to commit guys to the line of scrimmage," Tampa Bay strong safety John Lynch said. "If the Eagles can run on you, it's tough to stop them because they have so many options."

"We stopped their running game with me being able to stay back. We frustrated them, and our offense helped us by responding early when we got behind 7-0."

Last week, the Bucs' defensive players talked about how much confidence they had in their offense, unlike previous seasons. In Tampa Bay's last three playoff losses dating back to 1999, the Bucs failed to score an offensive touchdown.

"I think they were shocked by what our offense was able to do," said defensive tackle Warren Sapp, who was smiling despite suffering a dislocated finger and getting stitches above an eye that was almost swollen shut. "We kept going at them, and they couldn't stop our offense."

Tampa Bay finished 27th in rushing and gained only 49 yards on the ground Sunday. But quarterback Brad Johnson came through with another clutch performance to take some pressure off the defense.

"To win this game to earn our first trip to the Super Bowl in this stadium is almost sweeter than doing it at home," said Lynch, a San Diego native. "To do it on the road is special because no one thought we could do it except us."

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:26AM

Rockets stay up for reality series

By JONATHAN FEIGEN

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SAN ANTONIO -- A month ago, the logical plan seemed to be win like crazy against the soft underbelly of the NBA and hope to survive when things got tough. By the time the last scraps of confetti hit the Compaq Center floor and the circus left town on Friday, the plan had been exposed as backward.

The Rockets' four-point overtime victory over the Lakers in the Yao Ming-Shaquille O'Neal showdown spotlight stood out as their favorite win. But rather than lament having to follow that triumph with the Spurs and Mavericks back-to-back, the Rockets could give thanks they don't have to face the likes of the Hawks or Warriors.

Friday might have seemed like a dream. Reality, however, demands to be noticed.

"Friday's over with," Rockets guard Cuttino Mobley said. "We celebrated that night. You're supposed to win at home. It's good for the city, yet we have a lot to accomplish. We still have San Antonio in San Antonio and Dallas in Dallas.

"All games mean something, but you see these guys in the playoffs. Right now, we're on a little streak. Games like San Antonio and Dallas are good for us."

Today the Rockets take a four-game winning streak -- their longest this season and the longest active win streak in the NBA -- to San Antonio, where they have lost in their last nine visits.

"It was a tough week. This week is even tougher," Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich said. "We have the old Texas two-step back-to-back with San Antonio and the Mavs and then Detroit coming in here.

"San Antonio is as big a game as we're going to get. It has that Texas flavor. We had a good win against them (in Houston). They're going to be up for it. They're in the thick of things. It's really good for the league; it's good for the interest in our state. The extra pressure and focus on these games, we have to deal with it. That's how it is in the postseason.

"A lot of tough teams are coming our way. We're doing well. We've been in these situations before when we've been short-handed. I'm pleased ... we're clicking on all cylinders."

Rarely would teams look forward to consecutive games against the Spurs and Mavericks. But for the Rockets, there might be no better time. At least defensively, they are playing better than they have all season. And for a team that, as Maurice Taylor said, "is known for having a lot of talent that doesn't always get the job done," little else could snap the Rockets back to NBA reality more effectively.

"Nobody has mentioned the (Lakers) game," Taylor said. "It was a big win. It was a good night. But it's over. We have tough games ahead. That's the NBA. You play every night. You forget the last win or the last loss and move on.

"It's important to put it behind us. It was a good game. It was an exciting game. It was a special kind of atmosphere. But it was just a regular-season game. We have to put it behind us and get ready for San Antonio. Record-wise, they're a better team than the Lakers.

"At least we had the fans behind us against the Lakers. Now we have to go on the road. They're both in our division. These games are more important than the Lakers game was. But we've proven ourselves a little bit. Playing the Celtics, Suns and Lakers, we looked at as an extremely tough three-game stretch. We came away with some pretty big wins."

There is no question about where the improvement has been. In the past 10 games, only four Rockets opponents have made even 40 percent of their shots, and none have shot better than the Warriors' 42.7 percent Jan. 4.

The Rockets have moved on to their 14th starting lineup of the season, with James Posey stepping in for the injured Glen Rice at small forward. But while the Rockets are still working to smooth their offense, the defense has continued to grow stronger.

"We've played pretty good," Taylor said. "But I think we can play better. We haven't shot the ball well in about two or three weeks. We've played better. But right now, we're improving our defense. We're a hard team to score against. Regardless of who we play, we have a scheme. It seems like teams haven't really figured it out. If you look at the field-goal percentages the last two weeks, nobody is really shooting near 45 (percent).

"It hasn't been pretty offensively. But defensively, we've been playing a whole lot better than we've been playing the whole season. We're still searching for our chemistry on offense, but having a lot of players is helping us on defense. We have so many guys to bring in, guys who can defend a couple positions."

Much of the attention, however, will remain on the center position.

After a night against O'Neal, Yao will move on to David Robinson and Tim Duncan, with Kevin Willis bringing his customary muscle in reserve. From there, Yao will proceed to a rematch with the Mavericks' Shawn Bradley, whom he burned for 30 points, and then will face the Pistons' Ben Wallace, the Eastern Conference's likely All-Star starter.

"I think I'm a little more adjusted because of the experience I have," Yao said of the demands this week.
"I think I have a little more of a feel for having played people before.

"That's just life."

It is life in the NBA, but never more so for the Rockets.

Jan. 19, 2003, 11:20PM

Soaring Aeros punish Moose 6-1

By ANDREW J. FERRARO
Special to the Chronicle

They won't see home ice for three weeks, but the Aeros gave the home crowd a performance they won't soon forget Sunday afternoon.

Playing their third game in three nights, the Aeros dug deep and found more than enough energy for a five-goal win as they routed the Manitoba Moose 6-1.

Beginning Tuesday night at Hartford, the Aeros will be on the road for eight consecutive games and will be away from Compaq Center until Feb. 9 against the Milwaukee Admirals.

All-star Jean-Guy Trudel and team captain Sylvain Cloutier each scored a goal and added an assist as the Aeros won for the eighth time in their last nine games (8-0-1) at home.

Derek Gustafson was outstanding in goal and stopped 24 of the 25 shots he faced and improved to 14-6-2 on the season.

The Aeros scored five unanswered goals after the Moose tied the game 1-1, giving the Aeros the momentum they needed to win their 13th game in their last 16.

"Momentum plays such a huge role in these games and after we scored that second goal, it just seemed to get our legs going," said Aeros coach Todd McLellan. "We're a better team when we get into second gear, and I think from that point on we got the momentum we needed."

It didn't take the Aeros long to get on the board. After winning the opening faceoff, the Aeros carried the puck into the offensive zone and Matt Cullen gave the Aeros a 1-0 lead just 24 seconds into the game.

Cullen's initial shot was stopped by Moose goalie Tyler Moss, but Cullen took control of his own rebound and scored on his second shot.

But a costly defensive miscue led to Manitoba's first goal of the game, just 55 seconds later. Moose center Brandon Reid intercepted a pass at the blue line and skated in alone and beat Gustafson at 1:19.

But with time winding down in the period, the Aeros regained the lead with just four seconds left in the

first. Curtis Murphy took control of the puck at center ice and fed Cory Larose who was skating down the near side.

Just when it appeared that Larose was going to shoot, he slid a pass over to Lawrence Nycholat who fired a one-timer by Moss at 19:56.

The Aeros put the game away in the second period with three goals on 18 shots. Heavy forechecking and a miserable period by the Moose allowed the Aeros to score three goals in a span of 8:36 to put the game out of reach.

First, Rastislav Pavlikovsky scored on a rebound at 9:40. Then, with the Aeros on their second power play chance of the night, Trudel scored his team-leading 20th goal of the season at 13:29.

Then Kyle Wanvig scored his first goal since Dec. 14, a period of 16 games, at 17:04 on a rebound.

Cloutier scored his first goal at home 4:24 into the third period to close the scoring for the Aeros. Cloutier's first three goals of the season were on the road in Milwaukee.

With the win, the Aeros improved to 6-1 on Sundays and are 5-2-0 in the last game when playing three games in three nights.

"I don't know what it is, but we've been pretty successful in three-and-threes," said Larose. I don't know if it's because we play a lot or what it is, but we just kind of get into a groove."

Jan. 19, 2003, 10:35PM

Biggio, McLane plan talks

Contract extension topic of meeting

By JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ
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Since buying the Astros, Drayton McLane Jr. has remained loyal to his Central Texas roots and the franchise's two biggest stars, Jeff Bagwell and Craig Biggio.

The devotion to McLane's roots will be on display early in the week when the Astros' Caravan visits Temple and Cameron. Later in the week, McLane will meet with Biggio to discuss a potential contract extension.

"I'm going to visit with Craig and his agent in the next couple of days," said McLane, a Temple resident who grew up in Cameron. "Craig's a good person. He's been one of the cornerstones of the franchise."

Biggio, who hit .253 with 15 home runs and 58 RBIs in 2002, will be in the final year of his contract this season unless he signs an extension.

Biggio, 37, has made it clear he would like to play at least three more seasons. But he must move to the outfield to make room for slugging second baseman Jeff Kent, who signed a two-year, \$17.5 million deal last month in what many experts consider one of the best free-agent signings in franchise history.

Biggio "said to me and said it publicly that Jeff Kent adds to our team," McLane said. "We just need to sit down and talk."

Because of a desire to remain within a responsible budget, the mid-market Astros are trying to dump salaries to keep in line with the budget.

But the budget will hardly be a concern for fans during the caravan as McLane brings Kent, Lance Berkman, manager Jimmy Williams, general manager Gerry Hunsicker, Geoff Blum, Brandon Puffer and Hall of Fame broadcaster Milo Hamilton to Central Texas.

The tour will begin with a stop at Temple's Colonial Mall today. Berkman, Kent, Williams, Hunsicker, Hamilton, Blum and Puffer will sign autographs at the mall from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, the Astros will visit the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Shoemaker High School, Scott & White Hospital, Temple College, and Temple High School.

The Astros will visit patients at Scott & White Hospital from 10:45 a.m.-noon Tuesday. Wednesday the group will attend the Temple Lions Club weekly luncheon from noon to 1 p.m. before ending the Central Texas leg with an assembly at Cameron Yoe High School from 1:45-3:00 p.m.

"It's really gratifying to me and my family to get these players here to get them involved with the public," McLane said.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:10AM

Mixed fate for Americans

Serena, Shaughnessy advance to quarterfinals; Blake ousted

MELBOURNE, Australia -- Once again, Serena Williams had a slow start but a strong finish, moving within three victories of capturing the Australian Open championship and a "Serena Slam."

Williams, who already holds the 2002 titles from the French Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open, beat Eleni Daniilidou 6-4, 6-1 today.

Her quarterfinal opponent will be fellow American Meghann Shaughnessy, who saved five break points in the final game to beat Elena Bovina 5-7, 6-2, 6-4.

"That's a great win for her," Williams said of Shaughnessy. "OK, that's two Americans in the quarterfinals, so one of us is guaranteed to get to the semis."

Rainer Schuettler made the most of 2002 runner-up Marat Safin's withdrawal by reaching the final eight with a 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 6-3 victory over American James Blake.

Williams played the last match on center court before organizers suspended play on the outside courts, citing temperatures of 95 degrees and high humidity. They had the option of closing the roof over center court.

Organizers had the option of closing the stadium roof for center court matches.

"It was hot, but it could be worse," Williams said. "I live in Florida, where you lose 20 pounds walking outside; this is nothing."

The tournament's Extreme Heat Policy goes into effect when the temperature reaches 95 -- a reduction from 100 last year -- and when a heat stress measure known as the wet bulb globe temperature reaches 28. Both must occur simultaneously.

Williams, who missed the Australian Open with an injury last year before winning the other three majors, has struggled early in three of her four matches here so far. In Monday's first set, she gestured in exasperation over some of her misses.

Her serve was broken twice in the set, but she broke three times. The 20-year-old Daniilidou, who's from

Greece and was seeded 18th, helped by double-faulting eight times.

Williams then settled down, reducing her errors from 21 in the first set to six in the second.

"I always say, 'OK, keep trying,' Williams said. "I got out to a slow start, which is something I don't want to happen" as the matches get tougher.

Shaughnessy, a 23-year-old American who's seeded 25th, reached the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam event for the first time by winning her 11th straight match to start the year. Before the Australian, she won a warmup tournament in Canberra.

Shaughnessy saved break points with an error by the 19-year-old Russian, a service winner, an overhead smash, an inside-out forehand and an ace.

After another service winner, she finished the 2-hour, 19-minute match when the 20th-seeded Bovina netted a backhand serve return.

Shaughnessy's previous best showing in a major came at the 2001 French Open and Wimbledon, where she reached the fourth round.

Schuettler, a 26-year-old German who had never reached a Grand Slam quarterfinal before, rebounded from early service breaks by Blake in the first two sets.

In the final set, the two traded service breaks in the fourth and fifth games, and Schuettler gained the key break in the sixth when Blake double-faulted. Schuettler finished with a forehand down the line that Blake couldn't handle at the net.

"When you're playing for something that's really important, the quarterfinal of a Grand Slam, it hurts," Blake said. "I learned something. You can't play the same tennis in the second week as you can in the first."

Among the men, three-time champion Andre Agassi advanced when Argentina's Guillermo Coria quit with foot problems while trailing 6-1, 3-1.

He will meet 2001 semifinalist Sebastien Grosjean, a 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 winner over Spain's Felix Mantilla. It was Mantilla's fourth consecutive five-set match.

In another quarterfinal, No. 4 Juan Carlos Ferrero, the French Open runner-up, will meet Wayne Ferreira, playing his 49th consecutive Grand Slam event and trying for his first major semifinal since the 1992 Australian Open.

Jan. 20, 2003, 12:09AM

Oakland Raiders head to Super Bowl

By RICHARD JUSTICE

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OAKLAND, Calif. -- The thing about the Oakland Raiders is they always saw themselves as champions. Even in those years when they were barely competitive, the Raiders walked past those three Super Bowl trophies every day and heard owner Al Davis constantly use words like *greatness*. And even when no one else believed, they did.

Some renovation jobs take longer than others.

The Raiders clinched their first Super Bowl appearance in 19 long years Sunday evening by defeating the Tennessee Titans 41-24 in an AFC Championship Game that had as many gut-wrenching mistakes as artistic big plays.

"Words can't even describe how we feel," Raiders first-year coach Bill Callahan said. "It was an incredible journey, and we still have one more game left. Tennessee came in here and poured their hearts out. I'm really proud of what we've accomplished."

Standing between the Raiders and their fourth Super Bowl trophy is a familiar face -- former Oakland coach Jon Gruden, who departed abruptly after last season partly because the Tampa Bay Buccaneers offered him millions and partly because he'd become frustrated working for the heavy-handed Davis.

Gruden finished his own remarkable season earlier on Sunday by leading Tampa Bay into its first Super Bowl with an upset of the Philadelphia Eagles.

This week as they prepared for the Titans, the Raiders were already looking forward to a possible game against their former coach. Raiders tackle Lincoln Kennedy called Gruden "a little man who wanted to be a big man" and referred to "a kind of Napoleonic complex."

Oakland quarterback Rich Gannon had a big day in throwing three touchdown passes and running for another as the Raiders turned three Tennessee mistakes into 13 points.

The Raiders opened the game in a no-huddle offense that rushed down the field for touchdowns on its first two possessions. Gannon completed passes to five different receivers on those two drives, and things were going so well, the Raiders called just one running play in the first three quarters.

Raiders wide receiver Brown caught nine balls for 73 yards to lead all Oakland receivers, but running back Charlie Garner got seven for 55 yards and a touchdown.

"I've been looking at this game for 14 years and watching other people go," Brown said. "Now, I'm finally on my way. It's a great feeling."

The Raiders were not smooth. They were called for 14 penalties, including some vicious late hits on Titans quarterback Steve McNair, who played courageously despite an array of injuries.

The Titans also rushed for 138 yards against Oakland's defense. In the end, though, the Raiders got the victory they were convinced they should have gotten the last two years when seasons ended with bitter defeats, especially last year's controversial loss in the New England snow and ice.

It's especially sweet for 40-year-old Jerry Rice and 37-year-old Gannon and a host of other thirty-something players. And it's a special moment for Callahan, one of the least known men to ever coach in a Super Bowl, and as always, for Al Davis, the irascible boss of the Raiders.

Super Bowl XXXVII will be a matchup of the NFL's No. 1 offense (Oakland) and its No. 1 defense (Tampa Bay). The last time these two teams met was in 1999 when Oakland handed the Bucs a 45-0 defeat -- the worst in their modest history.

For the Titans, it will be an agonizing offseason as they think back to a game that was more winnable than the final score indicated.

"No one gave us a chance when we were 1-4," Tennessee tight end Frank Wycheck said. "We can hang our hat on the fact we were 30 minutes from getting to the Super Bowl."

The Titans had a 17-14 lead late in the second half, but fumbled twice in the final two minutes of the first half to give Oakland 10 points. And when they failed to protect punter Craig Hentrich and allowed him to be tackled on his own 19-yard line midway through the third quarter, the Raiders got another cheap field goal for a 27-17 lead.

McNair's 13-yard touchdown run made it 27-24 at the end of the third quarter, but Gannon resolutely led an eight-play 66-yard drive that ended with his two-yard touchdown run that amounted to the clinching score and a 34-24 lead with 11:27 left in the fourth quarter.

"He's the league's MVP," Titans linebacker Keith Bullock said. "He does what he's supposed to do and makes the other team adjust. But it's hard to stop them when you give them the ball inside your 30-yard line three different times."

When Oakland fullback Zack Crockett scored on a seven-yard touchdown run with 3:25 left in the

contest to make it 41-24, Network Associates Coliseum became a roaring, wild party that could heard all the way to San Diego, sight of Super Bowl XXXVII.

"We fought all year long," Raiders wide receiver Jerry Rice said. "When we lost four straight games, this team stuck together and now we're going to the Super Bowl."

The Raiders opened the game in such a rush, driving 69 yards and 85 yards for touchdowns on two possession that it looked like it might be the rout some expected.

Gannon was 10 for 10 on the two drives and hit completed 12 in a row before throwing an incomplection. He made it 7-0 by scooting around in the pocket and finding wide receiver Jerry Porter with a three-yard touchdown pass to end the first Oakland possession. He flipped a 12-yard scoring pass to Garner to end the second, and it was 14-7 with 2:47 left in the first quarter.

The Titans didn't back down as McNair continued to make plays, and as Oakland suddenly lost its offensive rhythm for a period in the second half. But Gannon kept finding open receivers and the Tennessee mistakes were too much to overcome.

"I think it will be a great Super Bowl," Titans head coach Jeff Fisher said. "No one knows what's going to happen. I think this team (the Raiders) are hard to stop."

Jan. 19, 2003, 11:15PM

Brown finally gets to Super Bowl

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OAKLAND, Calif. -- Some of the Oakland Raiders have called this "Tim's Team."

And Sunday was Tim's night -- no doubt about it.

After 15 NFL seasons with the same team, Tim Brown is finally going to the Super Bowl.

Leading into the AFC championship game, Brown wouldn't go so far as to say his career would have been incomplete without a trip to the title game. He said he would just look back and consider certain moments as "missed opportunities."

There's no need to worry about that anymore. The Raiders are headed to San Diego, reaching the Super Bowl for the first time in 19 years after defeating the Tennessee Titans 41-24. Oakland will take on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for the NFL championship.

"I've been looking at this game for 14 years now and watching other people go," Brown said. "It's a great feeling."

In the final minutes, the 36-year-old Brown sat on the bench with a towel over his head as he cried tears of joy. Players walked by and shook his hand. During the trophy presentation, Brown ran his fingers along the hardware while holding his young daughter, Timon.

"Isn't that wonderful?" Raiders senior assistant Bruce Allen said as he scurried toward the field to get in position for the postgame celebration. "I'm glad I'm going with him."

Brown had two catches in the Raiders' first series, capped by Jerry Porter's 3-yard touchdown catch that gave Oakland the early momentum.

Brown finished with nine catches for 73 yards, but stats haven't mattered much to him. Getting to the Super Bowl has been his ultimate mission.

"After watching this for 14 years, to play in that game, it's like being in a dream world," Brown said.

Brown and the Raiders were in the same spot two years ago and blew it. Oakland had the title game at

home and was coming off an impressive 27-0 victory over Miami. The Raiders were the NFL's top rushing team and the favorite, but were dominated by the eventual Super Bowl champion Baltimore Ravens 16-3.

"I'm ecstatic (for him)," coach Bill Callahan said. "As a coach, you try to get people to the place they want to go. For him, to get there is indescribable."

During the regular season, Brown had 81 catches for 930 yards and two touchdowns to help the Raiders win their third straight AFC West crown, but it was somewhat rocky at times. He remained professional through the season when quarterback Rich Gannon threw more balls to Jerry Rice and dealt with the emergence of the brash and confident Porter.

Brown believed all season that he would be in this spot.

He has frequently mentioned how he hopes his wife Sherice waits until after the Super Bowl to deliver twins. She went on bed rest this past week and could give birth any day, though doctors say she could make it until early February.

Brown was called a crybaby last week by Tennessee Titans safety Lance Schulters, who said Brown always whines to officials or because he wants the ball thrown to him more. Brown didn't mind fitting Schulters' label this time.

"He was crying, definitely tears of joy," right tackle Lincoln Kennedy said. "His response to me was, 'I guess I am a crybaby.'"

Jan. 18, 2003, 11:34PM

Cowher has key personnel moves ahead

By JOHN MCCLAIN

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After their come-from-behind victory over Cleveland in the wild-card round and three-point overtime loss at Tennessee in the divisional round, the Pittsburgh Steelers are facing a busy offseason.

Quarterback Kordell Stewart will be waived. Running back Jerome Bettis may have played his last game in black and gold.

"I'm not going to discuss anything in regards to that," coach Bill Cowher said about Stewart and Bettis. "It's not fair to do that. There are two high-profile players in Jerome Bettis and Kordell Stewart. There are a lot of questions that people have in regard to not just whether they come back, but the roles they will play.

"Those are things that you have to sit down and look at the roster and look at the cap. We'll see what our options are."

Bettis, 30, rushed for 666 yards -- the second-least productive season of his 10-year career. Amos Zereoue is the starting running back.

"I still think I have some football left in me," said Bettis, who is scheduled to undergo knee surgery this month. "My whole career I've had to prove myself, so I don't see this year being any different."

Cowher, who ripped the officials after the loss to the Titans, wasn't fined by the league. He apologized publicly after they returned to Pittsburgh for charging after referee Ron Blum after the game.

"I was very much wrong in charging the official at the end of the game," he said. "I don't think I looked as fast as Joe Paterno did when he was chasing the guy down. I didn't have as far to go, though. Whenever I saw Joe, I thought to myself, 'Why, Joe? Why would you do that?' And then I just did that."

In 11 seasons as Steelers coach, Cowher has taken them to the playoffs eight times. Although they lost in the second round this season, the Steelers and Cowher have lost in three of four AFC title games in Pittsburgh.

Around the league

Fan friendly

The Texans joined the Green Bay Packers and Pittsburgh Steelers as the NFL leaders in fan satisfaction in the first J.D. Power and Associates major-market sports report. The findings are based on surveys of more than 13,500 fans who attended sporting events last year.

The survey analyzed the fan experience based on 16 attributes, including food, drinks, obtaining tickets and behavior of fans at the events. Despite the team's 4-12 record, fans gave the Texans and Reliant Stadium high marks.

Looking back

-- When **Charley Casserly** was Washington's general manager, he traded for quarterbacks **Rich Gannon** and **Brad Johnson**, who start for Oakland and Tampa Bay today.

In August 1993, Casserly sent a fifth-round pick to Minnesota for Gannon. Because of **Mark Rypien's** injury and **Cary Conklin's** ineffectiveness, Gannon started four games and played in eight. He threw three touchdown passes and seven interceptions and had a passer rating of 59.5.

"He was young and raw, but he had a good arm and was a great athlete," Casserly said. "He was very mobile. We thought he might be able to play, but, obviously, we didn't know he'd turn out like he has."

Gannon suffered a partially torn rotator cuff and underwent surgery in the offseason and sat out the 1994 season before signing with Kansas City.

In 1999, Casserly traded picks in the first, second and third rounds to Minnesota for Johnson. He threw for 4,005 yards, 24 touchdowns and 13 interceptions and led the Redskins to the divisional round of the playoffs, where they lost to Tampa Bay.

Johnson lasted in Washington one more season. Owner **Daniel Snyder** fell in love with **Jeff George**, which allowed Johnson to sign with the Buccaneers.

"Brad had played very well in Minnesota, but he got hurt and **Randall Cunningham** really came on that season (15-1 in 1998)," Casserly said. "Brad had great size and a good arm, and he made good decisions. He still does."

"I'm happy for both of those guys. They came up the hard way, experienced some tough times, and they've had a lot of success. Both are very deserving of that success."

A monstrosity

-- Talking about the Buccaneers' chance to defeat Philadelphia and advance to their first Super Bowl, defensive tackle **Warren Sapp** knows they must have a superior performance from offense, defense and special teams.

"When we get the three-headed monster going, he's tough to slay," Sapp said.

About being the underdog, Sapp looked at a crowd of reporters and said: "You think we're going to get beat. That's OK because none of you matter."

Sweet memories

-- Tampa Bay coach **Jon Gruden** has an interesting opinion on Veterans Stadium. He spent three seasons as Philadelphia's offensive coordinator before Oakland hired him as its head coach.

"It's like a national landmark," Gruden said. "It's a special place to play because it's so rich in tradition. The Vet helped me get where I am today."

Thanks for bad memories

-- Because today's game will be the last football game at Veterans Stadium, the Eagles were asked all week what their feelings are about such a historic event.

"I won't miss it," cornerback **Troy Vincent** said.

"I agree with Troy," running back **Duce Staley** said.

Free safety **Brian Dawkins** put a different spin on The Vet.

"I'll miss the atmosphere," Dawkins said. "This is the only stadium I've called home. Opposing teams worry about the crowd, the turf and the weather before they even consider us. Because there are so many things to think about, it can be a distraction."

No. 1 priority

-- The Bears have the fourth pick in the draft. Historically, they haven't spent a lot of first-round picks on quarterbacks. But general manager **Jerry Angelo** was the personnel director at Tampa Bay when **Trent Dilfer** was the No. 1 pick in 1994.

Angelo doesn't have confidence in any of the quarterbacks who were on the roster last season -- **Chris Chandler**, **Jim Miller** and **Henry Burris**. Chandler and Miller were injured. Burris is unproven.

"We're not counting on any of our quarterbacks for the '03 season," Angelo said. "They've all had major durability concerns, and we'd be foolish to think we can count on them for the '03 season."

Angelo could trade up with Cincinnati and get the top pick to draft USC quarterback **Carson Palmer**. Or he could sit tight and hope no one trades up with Detroit or the Texans to get Marshall quarterback **Byron Leftwich**.

Getting defensive

-- Defensive coordinator **Ray Rhodes** resigned from the Broncos and would like to be reunited with **Mike Holmgren** in Seattle. Holmgren fired **Steve Sidwell** in a defensive housecleaning after the season.

Denver coach **Mike Shanahan** would love to hire **Bob Slowick**, Green Bay's defensive coordinator. But there is no reason Sherman should let Slowick out of his contract with the Packers. Slowick, who never had been a defensive coordinator until Sherman hired him, is regarded as one of the best in the business.

Impressive numbers

-- Tampa Bay quarterback **Brad Johnson** has been in the playoffs in nine of his 11 seasons with the Vikings, Redskins and Buccaneers, even though he sat on the bench much of the time. ... The Raiders had fewer three-and-out series than any team in the league. ... Eagles cornerback **Troy Vincent** on today's game: "Offense isn't going to win this game. The defense that plays the best is going to win." ... Buccaneers defensive end **Simeon Rice**, who played his entire career with Arizona until coming to Tampa Bay in 2001, can't believe his good fortune. "This is the deepest I've been in the playoffs," he said. "When I was with the Cardinals, I used to dream about getting this kind of chance to play in the Super Bowl." ... ESPN's **Ron Jaworski**, who led the Eagles to Super Bowl XV against the Raiders, said about Veterans Stadium: "The field is so much better than it used to be. It used to be concrete with a table cloth on it."

Tied at the top

-- Since the start of the 2000 season, Tampa Bay's **Jon Gruden** and Philadelphia's **Andy Reid** are tied for the league's best record at 34-14. ... Since 1996, the Bucs are 40-18 in November and December. ... The Bucs had four shutouts in their first 26 seasons and two this season at Baltimore (25-0) and Chicago (15-0). They had one road shutout coming into this season. ... Tampa Bay set team records with 12 regular-season wins and six victories on the road. ... The Bucs are 0-6 in playoff games on the road. ... The Bucs are the only team to make the playoffs the last four years. Tampa Bay and Miami are the only teams to make the playoffs in five of the last six years.

John McClain covers the NFL for the Chronicle. His NFL Notebook appears Sundays.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:37PM

Illinois governor may have saved us from ourselves

By **LEONARD PITTS JR.**
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Forgive me, but I'm about to speak heresy.

Blame the outgoing governor of Illinois, who last week emptied his state's death row. George Ryan commuted to life in prison the death sentences of 167 condemned criminals.

The result: a firestorm of criticism, much of it from those who have lost loved ones to violent crime. Our instinct is to give great weight to what those people have to say. To listen with reverence.

But -- and here's the heresy -- maybe we've already listened with too much reverence.

I bow to no one in my empathy for people whose lives have been affected by violent crime. You see, I live with one. My wife's brother Ted was killed in a random shooting 10 years ago.

I still remember her saying, "What? What?" over and over again into the receiver when we got that awful 3 a.m. phone call. It was as if words had suddenly ceased to have meaning.

I have stood with her at his grave. I have awakened at night to find her wide awake. I have held her helplessly as she wept.

So I know a little something about this. And one of the things I know is that there's nothing I would not have done to spare her that pain. Or to get justice for her.

That's the problem. Because we all feel that way, don't we? We all empathize, we all suffer with them, we all feel there's nothing we would not or should not do for people whose grief is so immense. And if they want, if they need, to see a killer killed, so be it.

It can seem insensitive or even uncaring to voice doubt about that process. Yet if you are intellectually honest about it, how can you not? The answer is simple: Avoid intellectual honesty at all costs.

Consider a recent study showing Maryland has been choosing whom to execute based on color of skin and place of residence. You'd think that would give a fair man pause. Yet new Gov. Robert Ehrlich has shrugged it off, keeping an ill-advised campaign promise to lift a death-penalty moratorium imposed by

his predecessor.

The difference between Ryan and Ehrlich is this: Somehow, Ryan reached a point where conscience would no longer allow him to ignore what he saw. Three years ago, Ryan, a former death-penalty supporter, suspended state executions. He was stung by the fact that since 1977, 13 people had been freed from the Illinois death house after they were found to have been wrongly convicted.

Now the other shoe drops. "I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death," Ryan said. Surely that makes sense. If you owned a machine -- a car, a computer, etc. -- that was as prone to failure as capital punishment, you'd have ditched it. Yet we insist that this broken hunk of junk can somehow be made to function properly if we are just persistent enough. And never mind all the people who are freed from death row because a cop lied, a witness erred, a lawyer bungled, the system failed.

Killing killers illustrates our respect for the sanctity of life, death-penalty advocates argue with oily, Orwellian rhetoric. And you look at this poor slob who just spent 20 years under sentence of death for something he didn't do and you wonder, what about *his* life? Doesn't it have sanctity, too?

By any logical standard, life without parole should be the highest punishment in our legal arsenal. It's less expensive than the death penalty, and it is reversible in the event of error.

So where's the logic in state-sanctioned executions? There isn't any. There's only the blinding emotion that says if we don't kill killers, we betray the victims. We show ourselves to be soft.

And how silly is that? By sentencing 167 people to a slow death in a cell, Ryan didn't save killers from justice. But he just may have saved us from ourselves.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:22PM

New opera season steady, not heady

By CHARLES WARD

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The Houston debut of superstar American countertenor David Daniels, the premiere of a new work by Jake Heggie and four new productions will head Houston Grand Opera's 2003-04 season.

Loaded with favorite operas, the lineup includes the return of sopranos Patricia Racette, Maria Guleghina and Catherine Malfitano. It also has the debut of soprano Adrienne Dugger, who is assuming the mantle as the leading Turandot of our time, said HGO general director David Gockley.

The season doesn't offer any obvious slogan like the current "Year of the Diva." It does balance core repertoire with two near-core pieces and Heggie's *The End of the Affair*, based on the Graham Greene novel set in London during and just after World War II.

"My sense is that people crave certainties right now," Gockley said. Audiences are attracted more than ever to things they know, he added.

So, Gockley is offering two Puccini works. *Tosca* opens the season on Oct. 24, followed by Handel's *Julius Caesar*, Janáček's *Jenufa*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, the work by Heggie (composer of *Dead Man Walking*), Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Puccini's *Turandot*.

For sheer singing, *Turandot*, the story of the Chinese princess afraid of love, may be the blockbuster (though Gockley says *Tosca* will have "a blood-and-guts traditional cast").

In addition to Dugger, who is singing the title role at New York's Metropolitan Opera this season, Gockley has booked Russian tenor Vladimir Galouzine (Calaf) and soprano Ana Maria Martinez (Liù).

A close challenge will be *Julius Caesar*. Laura Claycomb will return as Cleopatra. Daniels, the Caesar, will be one of three countertenors, with Brian Asawa and Matthew White.

HGO music director Patrick Summers will conduct four productions. Guest conductors will be Antonello Allemandi, Dennis Russell Davies and Claus Peter Flor.

Gockley said the company will celebrate its 50th anniversary season during 2004-05 (its first performance was in January 1956). Features projected for that season will include a new opera by Daniel

Catán, the Houston debut of Welsh baritone Bryn Terfel in the title role of Verdi's *Falstaff* and a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* with an operatic cast.

The details of the 2003-04 season:

· *Tosca* (opening Oct. 24): Guleghina (Tosca), Alfredo Portilla (Cavaradossi) and Franz Grundheber (Scarpia). Allemandi (conductor). Garnett Bruce (director). Production from San Diego Opera.

· *Julius Caesar* (Oct. 30): Daniels (Caesar), Claycomb (Cleopatra), Theodora Hanslowe (Cornelia), Patricia Risley (Sextus), Asawa (Ptolemy), White (Nireus). Summers (conductor). James Robinson (director). New production.

· *Jenufa* (Jan. 23, 2004): Racette (Jenufa), Malfitano (Kostelnicka), Stefan Margita (Laca), Raymond Very (Steva), Davies (conductor). David Alden (director). New production.

· *The Magic Flute* (Jan. 30): Chad Shelton (Tamino), Alexandra Coku (Pamina), Daniel Belcher (Papageno), Katarzyna Dondalska (Queen of the Night), Oren Gradus (Sarastro). Flor (conductor). Christopher Mattaliano (director). Production by Maurice Sendak.

· *The End of the Affair* (March 4): Cheryl Barker (Sarah), Peter Coleman Wright (Henry), Teddy Tahu Rhodes (Bendrix), Robert Orth (The Detective). Summers (conductor). Michael Mayer (director). New production.

· *The Barber of Seville* (April 23): Earle Patriarco (Figaro), Joyce DiDonato (Rosina), Richard Croft (Count Almaviva), John Del Carlo (Dr. Bartolo), Vladimir Ognovenko (Basilio). Summers (conductor). Lindy Hume (director). New production set in the early 1960s.

· *Turandot* (April 30): Dugger (Turandot), Galouzine (Calaf), Martinez (Liù), Summers (conductor). Production from Minnesota Opera.

For information about season tickets, call 713-228-6737.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:36PM

Reality show 'millionaire' talks about life as a regular Joe

By MIKE McDANIEL

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HOLLYWOOD -- He doesn't care if people think he's gay or a woman-hater. It doesn't bother him that people know he was an underwear model or how much money he made last year. But the one thing Evan Marriott, aka *Joe Millionaire*, is ashamed about is that he never graduated high school.

"If I had thought there was any scandal in my life, I wouldn't have done the show," Marriott said.

He knew the media would poke around in his private life after the enormous success of the Fox reality series, which returns with a new episode tonight (8 p.m., Channel 26). And he knew he had nothing to hide.

"The gay stuff has tickled me immensely," he said.

What does bother him, he said, is that's it out that he didn't finish high school.

He left in his junior year, he said, "because I didn't want to take a government class because, frankly, I thought the teacher was just too strict and too tough and I didn't like school, period. I wanted to stare out the window at the maintenance guys redoing the baseball diamond. I wanted to watch the road being built across the street, and the trucks. I was always fascinated with that.

"It was disheartening to my parents. I'm the only family member that never went to college. But since the day I was born, I've always done what I wanted to do. I moved all the way (to Los Angeles) from Virginia. I was the child who didn't mind working as a bellman or a doorman, didn't mind hip-hopping around from here to there. And this is where it's led me."

It's true, he said, that he only made \$19,000 last year working construction jobs, the result of a bad economy that made it impossible for him to find work for half the year. On *Joe Millionaire*, the women seeking to become his wife have been told he has \$50 million.

In real life, he said, he and his family have struggled financially. Both of his parents worked; at one time, his father held down three jobs, working at a bank by day, teaching classes at night and serving in the Marine Corps Reserves on weekends.

"I had Ralph Lauren clothes but they were bought from TJ Maxx," he said.

Today, *Marriott* is on the hottest new show on television. It scored the highest ratings for a premiere this season among the 18-49 audience, which is the one advertisers most want to reach. And its appeal has crossed the gender gap; it reaches almost as many men as it does women. Only *Friends* and *ER*, two long-established shows, do better in reaching the desired demographics, said Sandy Grushow, chairman of the Fox Entertainment Group.

It's been overwhelming for Marriott.

"Coming from construction, I don't think anybody's prepared for anything like this," he said. "I don't know if I enjoy the fame. I don't know if I can say it's really fun. What I get a kick out of -- and it's really sappy -- the other day I was at TGI Fridays and a kid came up with a little truck. And his parents wanted me to take a picture with him. I thought that was really cool because as a kid I loved trucks. I met a couple from Denver and they thought it was just the most amazing thing that they had seen somebody on TV.

"It's freaky to me, because I was on a backhoe eight weeks ago. Now I'm somebody that somebody wants to get near and touch. That's weird.

"I'm not back to a normal life yet, and I don't know what the future holds for me."

The show is not paying him big bucks, he has said, but he's rich in other ways.

"I've seen Europe three different times now," he said. "I've been to Bermuda. And I've met all kinds of wonderful people. I've got rich friends, poor friends, gay friends, lesbian friends, black friends, Asian friends -- that is what I'm rich in."

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:42PM

'AMERICAN LION' ROARS

History Channel explores Theodore Roosevelt's life

By ANN HODGES

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Biographers call him an American original. Tonight and Tuesday, the History Channel calls him *TR: An American Lion* -- and the aptness of that title is evident in virtually every foot of this remarkably rich television tapestry. The story of Theodore Roosevelt, America's 26th president, is also the story of a dramatically changing America.

"He was a romantic, a cowboy, a legislator, an explorer, a governor, a war hero and a president ... the bold leader America needed," says narrator Edward Herrmann, setting the stage.

Most, but not all, of Roosevelt's accomplishments are at least mentioned here. He was a naturalist, he spoke six languages and wrote 35 books. He was the first president to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the only one to win his country's Medal of Honor.

"Under fire, at San Juan Hill," boasts his proud grandson, "he didn't say, 'Charge!' He said, 'Follow me!'"

That's just one of many fascinating footnotes from his descendents, biographers, historians, a governor (George Pataki of New York, where TR also served as governor), a former president (Bill Clinton) and President George W. Bush's aide, Karl Rove. In a welcome exercise of viewer friendliness, all the experts are identified each time they speak.

In a treasury of vintage photos and films, TR's accomplishments take shape. The films prove TR the man, and the president, for his time.

TR's energy overflows the screen, backed by his own splendid words. Excerpts from his diaries and books -- read, with vigor, by actor Richard Dreyfuss -- paint a portrait of the man that no scriptwriter could match. Herrmann's narration, written by producer/director David deVries, is a glowing companion piece.

Nobody ever dreamed that sickly child who "transformed himself from weakling to strong and manly" to please the father he adored would grow up to be a politician. That was an unfit occupation for a proper

young man of his day. "Well, if they're running the country," said he, "I want to be part of it." And he promptly won his first race, for New York state legislator.

Tonight he marries the girl of his dreams, but soon he's shattered by the deaths, just days apart, of his wife and mother. He quits the legislature and becomes a cattle rancher in the Dakotas.

"His high voice, spectacles, reedy body and his shouts of, 'Hasten forward quickly there!' " made the cowboys crack up," biographer Edmund Morris notes. But cowboys were the first to join when TR recruited Rough Riders to fight in Cuba.

That war with Spain "would propel both the man and his country to greatness." TR comes home a hero and becomes governor of New York, then McKinley's vice-presidential running mate. Fate and an assassin's bullet made him president. "It is a dreadful thing to come into the presidency this way," he says in Tuesday's Part 2, "but it would be a far worse thing to be morbid about it! Here is the task and I have got to do it to the best of my ability."

Conservation was the last thing Americans were thinking of when Roosevelt set up the U.S. Forest Service, creating bird sanctuaries, national parks and national monuments. He pushed to build the Panama Canal because he saw threats ahead from Germany and Japan (ahead of his time, indeed). "Don't debate the canal!" he thundered. "Build the canal, and debate *me* for the next half century."

His biggest racial stumble came after a riot in Brownsville where the all-black 25th Infantry unit was stationed. TR dishonorably discharged 67 African-American soldiers, six of whom had won Medals of Honor, before he learned that the investigation was biased and wrong about what had happened.

He won reelection in a landslide. "I loved every minute of being president," he said. Some said he loved it too much. He couldn't bear to give it up.

The "dark and bleak years" follow his unsuccessful presidential run on the Bull Moose ticket. On Nov. 11, 1918, the day World War I ended, TR was hospitalized. On Jan. 5, his son Archie cabled his brothers in Europe, "The Old Lion is dead."

In this marvelous documentary, the Old Lion still roars.

***TR: An American Lion*, 8 tonight and Tuesday on the History Channel. Grade: A.**

Jan. 19, 2003, 7:49PM

Pleasant 'Syncopation' is slow but sure

By EVERETT EVANS

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Stages offers a pleasant turn 'round the dance floor with its regional premiere of *Syncopation*.

First seen in 1999 at New Haven's Long Wharf Theater, Allan Knee's two-character play with dancing paints an affectionate portrait of ordinary souls finding their bit of magic through ballroom maneuvers.

Syncopation gains nostalgic appeal from its setting in 1911 New York City. Henry, a 38-year-old meatpacker, is obsessed with his dream of becoming a prize-winning ballroom dancer. He rents a sixth-floor walk-up loft, where he can hone his craft, and places an advertisement seeking a partner. The first applicant is Anna, a 24-year-old beader (she sews beads on women's garments).

Anna is interested in Henry's plan, but also wary, as a girlfriend has warned that the ad may be a predatory male's ploy for seducing young women. Yet Henry is so open, sincere and genuinely swept up in his ballroom mania that Anna decides to give it a whirl.

They agree to meet for weekly sessions and -- as Anna already is engaged, albeit to a man she plainly does not love -- to keep their relationship strictly professional. As the dance rehearsals become more frequent, however, Henry quickly becomes as obsessed with Anna as with his dream of ballroom glory.

So this is one of those "Will They Go from Friends to Lovers?" situations. By the time the first act closes with an ardent tango, that seems to be the direction things are heading.

Serious complications arise in the second act, though, as Anna falls under the influence of her new circle of worldly friends -- including a dashing, cape-wearing chap named Theo. Anna is as gone on Theo as poor Henry is on Anna (which she, of course, has never realized). Anna now wants much more than Henry's little dream of ballroom fame. Does this mean curtains for both Henry's romance and the dance team?

For much of its first act, *Syncopation* may be a little too mild-mannered for its own good. It takes a while for any sparks to fly, any chemistry to develop between Thomas Prior's likable goofy Henry and Sofia Gomez's sensibly restrained Anna. The situation doesn't generate much urgency, romantically or career-wise (they both have other jobs to support them, for instance).

Yet *Syncopation* is one of those slow-starters that, if you stay with it, pays off eventually. The second act registers as much more involving, beginning with the strong scene in which Anna first makes it clear to Henry that she no longer shares his goal.

The play's agreeable humorous streak also emerges more consistently in the second act, especially in detailing an outrageous publicity stunt of Henry's and how it goes awry.

Knee is most successful at drawing his two characters, making them detailed and believable. He incorporates some useful historical background, involving early 20th century trends and social changes.

Mark Ramont's subtle direction shows affection for the play and its characters. Whether in comic or poignant mode, the rendition stays warm and intimate -- though as noted, it could use greater punch and pull in some early scenes.

Jonathan Charles' choreography produces a few highlights, including the closing waltz. But in many of the routines, the simple and repetitive steps leave one suspecting a good deal more could be done to make the show's dance element distinctive. Maybe part of the point is that, however determined, Henry is never going to be a great dancer.

Like the play, Prior's Henry and Gomez's Anna grow on you. Prior's eager-beaver enthusiasm and coy awkwardness may be off-putting at first. Yet as the action progresses, he exudes desperate charm, wistful perseverance, and later, real pain in his hopeless love for Anna.

Gomez portrays Anna's self-preserving caution so well that she initially seems too understated and distant. Yet as with Prior, once things get rolling, Gomez's Anna grows more complex and compelling, particularly in her more dramatic second act speeches.

Scenic and properties designer Jodi Bobrovsky has created an evocative milieu, with her set's faux hardwood floor and four columns layered with various surfaces to suggest Henry's dance studio has had many past lives.

The show's score agreeably mixes authentic pieces of the period with Jeffrey Lunden's aptly styled new music in the same vein.

While it never quite sweeps you away -- well, not till the very end -- *Syncopation* exerts a modest charm surprisingly difficult to resist.

Syncopation

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays, through Feb. 9

Where: Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway

Tickets: \$32-\$42; 713-527-0123

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:23PM

Nexus shows its chops in concert at Rice University

By CHARLES WARD

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Nexus, one of the world's leading percussion ensembles, isn't a bang-the-drum loudly group, though it can throw off quite a racket.

To open its concert Friday at Rice University, Nexus whacked away, impressively *and* musically, on military-style drums in *Away without Leave*, based on cadences used in military bands.

But since its founding in 1971, Toronto-based Nexus has been interested in the instruments and styles of the world. This inquisitiveness dominated.

Tongues, written collectively by the group, featured the mbira, an African instrument that uses plucked metal tongues. It was accompanied by a larger mbira found in the Caribbean, plus a gourd and similar instruments.

The Invisible Proverb was an adaptation of a parable of a drummer seeking the meaning of a drum parable.

Using marimbas and xylophone, member Russell Hartenberger reinterpreted western African flute melodies and drumming styles, plus a song by Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu.

An internationally acclaimed classical composer, Takemitsu had a weakness for American popular songs, which he mimicked in items he wrote for Japanese radio.

The set of five reinterpretations by Nexus members used mallet instruments (vibraphone, marimba, etc.) to create a sometimes lush, sometimes eerie environment for Takemitsu's tunes. Simple, even banal music suddenly became sophisticated.

Some pieces were homegrown (the roots of the members are in the United States). These featured Bob Becker, a master xylophonist.

In two pieces emerging out of the 1920s -- *Valse Brillante* by George Hamilton Green and Becker's *Bye*

Bye Medley, a version of *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *Bye Bye Blues* in style of "novelty ragtime" -- Becker dashed up and down his instrument with the astonishing daring all virtuosos have.

Fantastic drumming wasn't left behind after the opening *Away without Leave*.

In *Drumming -- Part I* by Steve Reich, two to four Nexus musicians produced a torrent of sharp, mesmerizing patterns from eight small tuned drums.

Starting with simple slaps of their sticks, the Nexus members moved through dazzlingly complex rhythms that sometime receded, as if coming to an end, only to roar on again.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:24PM

Mystery, tradition of visitor to Poe grave continue

By FOSTER KLUG
Associated Press

BALTIMORE -- With his face hidden beneath a dark hood, a man crept into a bitterly cold downtown graveyard before dawn on Sunday and raised a solitary birthday toast to Edgar Allan Poe.

Continuing a 54-year tradition, the man, whose identity remains unknown, put his hand on Poe's tombstone, bowed, placed three red roses and a half-empty bottle of Martel cognac on the grave and then silently slipped back into the shadows.

A huge, pale-white moon glowed over the city, yet the man still eluded dozens of people who waited in their cars or huddled together on the sidewalk outside the cemetery.

"To me, it's magic," said Jeff Jerome, curator of the Poe House and Museum, who spent the night tucked inside a former Presbyterian church nearby with a small group of Poe enthusiasts he invited to watch the ritual. "It would be very easy to step out from our hiding place and expose him, but no one wants to ruin this mystery."

No one, not even Jerome, who has watched the cemetery every Jan. 19 since 1976, knows the identity of the so-called "Poe Toaster." The visit was first documented in 1949, a century after Poe's death. For decades, Jerome says, it was the same frail figure.

Then, in 1993, the original visitor left a cryptic note saying, "The torch will be passed." Another note left later told Jerome that the first man in black, who apparently died in 1998, had passed the tradition on to his sons.

A combination of respect, the visitor's cunning, and the chill of Baltimore on a January night have kept the curious from uncovering the secret.

Poe, who is best-known for poems and horror stories such as *The Raven* and *The Telltale Heart*, died in Baltimore at the age of 40 after collapsing, delirious, in a tavern.

The visitor's three roses are thought to honor Poe, his mother-in-law Maria Clemm, and his wife Virginia, all of whom are buried in the graveyard. The significance of the cognac is a mystery.

Jan. 19, 2003, 7:44PM

Girl Scouts are taking orders

By LUCAS WALL

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As I spied the Girl Scout meandering around the newsroom, cookie order form in hand, my mouth began salivating at the thought of my favorite Samoas and Tagalongs. These treats are so scrumptious it's a tragedy -- torture, really -- that they are only available once a year.

She finally reached my desk and thrust the order form in front of me. I scanned the eight options and my heart sank. Where are they? My favorite cookies -- they are not on the list! How could this be?

My eyes scanned the colorful order form. Quickly, a sigh of relief. There were photos of my Samoas and Tagalongs but they had new names: Caramel deLites and Peanut Butter Patties.

I inquired when this name change happened. The Girl Scout gave me a strange look and said she'd never heard of a Samoa or a Tagalong. Huh?

Perplexed, I looked back at the form. What I've always known as a Trefoil was now simply dubbed Shortbread. And a Do-si-do was changed to Peanut Butter Sandwich. How boring! Thin Mints were still Thin Mints, thank goodness. And then there were three cookies I'd never heard of.

Ah, I thought -- this must be some quirky Texas thing. It's my first Girl Scout cookie season in the Lone Star State, so these independent Texans must have created their own straight-talkin' monikers for these delights.

As it turns out, those of you in Brazoria, Fort Bend and Galveston counties know what a Tagalong is. So do folks in Dallas and San Antonio. In fact, cookie lovers in a majority of Texas counties will order them this year.

So what's going on here? It's a Girl Scout cookie name game.

Unbeknownst to many, Girl Scouts license two bakeries to make the 200 million-plus boxes of cookies

How to order

Don't know a Girl Scout but want some cookies? Not to worry. Order the \$3-per-box treats by calling the South Texas Council at 800-952-5556 or the San Jacinto Council at 888-472-6654.

The San Jacinto Council will host a "Just Desserts" fund raiser from 7 to 9 p.m. Feb. 6 at the Warwick Hotel. Local pastry chefs will have desserts made from Girl Scout cookies available for sampling. Each guest will receive eight boxes of cookies -- one of each ABC Bakers variety. Tickets are \$50. Call 713-292-0300 for information.

sold nationwide each year. Each of the nation's 316 local scout councils then decides which baker from which to buy.

Each baker may name its own cookies, though they are required to offer three standard issues: a peppermint (Thin Mints), a peanut butter/oatmeal (Do-si-Do/Peanut Butter Sandwich), and a shortbread (Trefoil/Shortbread). The vanilla cookie drenched in a caramel, sprinkled with toasted coconut and laced with cocoa stripes (the Samoa/Caramel deLite) and the cookies topped with creamy peanut butter and covered with a chocolaty coating (the Tagalong/Peanut Butter Patties) have proved so popular both bakeries offer them, although in slightly different fashion. The Caramel deLite is hexagonal, for example, while its cousin the Samoa is circular. That leaves three unique cookies each bakery may offer each year.

If the scout at your door is in the San Jacinto Council (Harris and 20 counties to the north), your cookies will come from ABC Bakers of Richmond, Va. Your bonus choices are Lemon Pastry Cremes, Animal Treasures and Friendship Circles.

If that cookie hawker has a South Texas Council patch on her uniform, however, your treats will come courtesy of Little Brownie Bakers of Louisville, Ky. You can also select Ole Oles, All Abouts or Aloha Chips.

Kirkwood South Christian Church in Pearland, which sits on the Harris County/Brazoria County cookie border, has scouts pushing both bakers' fare.

"It does get confusing," said Susan Parker, marketing representative for Little Brownie Bakers. "There's certain people who maybe live in Austin, which uses ABC, and so they'll go over to Waco because they want one of our cookies. 'I want your Samoas.' We hear about it a lot."

Parker touted her firm as the top cookie provider, supplying 12 of 19 Texas councils and 136 million boxes nationwide versus ABC's 81 million.

Sandy Poffinbarger, South Texas Council spokeswoman, said her 600 troops are striving to sell 850,000 of those Little Brownie boxes. Pre-orders started Jan. 11; cookie deliveries begin mid-February.

Poffinbarger said she's heard of folks who have moved into the area and inquire about cookies they can't find.

She encourages suburbanites who commute into the city to buy cookies in their neighborhood rather than at work so the money stays in their community. But if you want a Caramel deLite or Friendship Circle in Sugar Land, you'll have to smuggle it in.

Dianne Massie, San Jacinto cookie committee chairwoman, said she expects the council's 55,000 scouts to sell 3.5 million boxes. That's \$10.5 million worth, about two-thirds of which is kept by the council and its troops. San Jacinto has used ABC -- America's Best Cookies -- for 13 years.

"The bakeries come in and we do taste-test the cookies," she said. "We base it not only on taste but also what they can offer the program."

If someone calls asking for Samoas or Tagalongs, Massie said, "we tell them about our great cookies and they turn around and buy ours."

An ABC representative said "most consumers don't know there are two different bakers. ... The consumers are focused on the Girl Scout Cookies brand, not the different type of cookies involved."

Ursula Castrillon, spokeswoman for Girl Scout headquarters in New York, concurred. She said it's a common misperception that headquarters runs and profits from the cookie sales, when in fact all it does is license the bakers and oversee their performance.

"It's really 316 localized cookie sales," Castrillon said. "Each local council decides the planning and selling of the cookies, the distribution. They add up the numbers themselves and figure out what they want to do with the money. Girls are involved every step of the way."

One month until my Tagalongs -- I mean my Peanut Butter Patties -- arrive.

Maybe I should move to Dallas.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:32PM

Fox fates smile on 'Simpsons,' bag 'Futurama'

By MIKE McDANIEL

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HOLLYWOOD -- *The Simpsons* will be back for two more seasons, making it the longest-running TV comedy of all time, Fox Entertainment chief Gail Berman said Saturday. *Futurama* will not be back next year, and the future of the sitcom *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* is in doubt. But *King of the Hill* has been given a thumbs-up for the 2003-2004 season.

The fourth-place network hopes to recover some substantial ratings declines with the continued success of *Joe Millionaire*, the return Tuesday of *American Idol* and a March lineup that includes three new comedies, the most promising with stand-up comedian Wanda Sykes.

For the February sweeps, Fox has scheduled the return of *24* on Feb. 2, the return of the newsmagazine *The Pulse* on Feb. 6, a *Married ... With Children Reunion* special on Feb. 16 and the 300th original episode of *The Simpsons*, also on Feb. 16.

The network will also do some stunt casting in February. Jack Osbourne, Jessica Simpson and Seth Green will guest star on *That '70s Show*. Cloris Leachman will return to *Malcolm in the Middle* on Feb. 2 when Hal and Lois discover that another child is on the way. *American Idol* contestant Tamyra Gray will appear on four episodes of *Boston Public* beginning Feb. 17. Wesley Snipes guest stars on *The Bernie Mac Show* when it moves to its new time, 8 p.m. Wednesday, on Feb. 5.

On Feb. 28, two days after sweeps concludes, Mitch (David Hasselhoff) will get married on the movie *Baywatch Hawaiian Wedding*.

In March, the network will add three comedies to the lineup. *Oliver Beene* (March 9) centers on an 11-year-old (Grant Rosenmeyer) who's surrounded by a family of eccentrics. *Wanda at Large* (March 26) stars Sykes as a stand-up comedienne who takes a job as TV correspondent for a Washington, D.C., political talk show. *The Pitts* (March 30), starring Dylan Baker, is about a family eternally cursed by bad luck.

Fox will make 8 p.m. Mondays a home for reality shows. After *Joe Millionaire* concludes, *Married by America* will take its place on March 10. The public will play matchmaker for two men and two women looking for love, deciding which of five potential mates are matrimonial material for the four singles.

The renewal through May 2005 of *The Simpsons* means the series, winner of 18 Emmys and a Peabody since its Christmas 1989 debut, will have aired for more than 15 seasons, surpassing the 14-season run of ABC's *The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet*, which debuted in 1952.

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:27PM

Today on TV

American Experience

"The Murder of Emmett Till" recalls the 1955 death of a 14-year-old black boy who flirted with a white woman.

9 p.m., Channel 8.

Meet My Folks

Eight women compete to win a trip to Europe with one man.

9 p.m., Channel 2.

Clone High

The animated series features a high school populated with characters such as Abe Lincoln, Cleopatra and JFK.

9:30 p.m., MTV.

Top talk

Live With Regis and Kelly welcomes Rosie Perez, Simon Cowell, the butler from *Joe Millionaire* (9 a.m., Channel 13). On **Maury**, guests test their relationships when they reveal secrets (10 a.m., Channel 2). **The View** guests: Henry Simmons, Mario Cantone, family members of victims killed by death row inmates (10 a.m., Channel 13). On **Ricki Lake**, hidden cameras and tests prove if the accused are guilty as charged (10 a.m., Channel 26). **The Wayne Brady Show** features William Shatner, Dexter Scott King, Tyrese (3 p.m., Channel 13). **The Tonight Show With Jay Leno** welcomes Richard Gere, Nia Vardalos, Solomon Burke (10:35 p.m., Channel 2). **Late Show With David Letterman** guest: Simon Cowell (10:35 p.m., Channel 11). **The Caroline Rhea Show** features Scott Patterson, butler Paul Hogan (11:35 p.m., Channel 13). **Montel Williams** discusses violent crimes committed by teenage girls (12:05 a.m., Channel 2). **The Late Late Show With Craig Kilborn** welcomes Arsenio Hall, Sydney Tamiia

Poitier, D4 (12:05 a.m., Channel 11). On **Late Night With Conan O'Brien**, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jason Statham, Otis Lee Crenshaw (repeat, 1:05 a.m., Channel 2).

Jan. 19, 2003, 6:36PM

On Two

A kangaroo hopped past comedian Martin Lawrence at the weekend box office.

Kangaroo Jack, a comedy about two hapless pals trying to retrieve missing mob money from a kangaroo in Australia, edged into first place in its debut weekend, taking in \$17.7 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

National Security, an action comedy starring Martin Lawrence and Steve Zahn as ex-cops who crack a smuggling ring, opened at No. 2, earning an estimated \$15.7 million.

Last weekend's No. 1 film, *Just Married*, fell to third place.

With Hollywood awaiting the upcoming Oscar nominations, light comedy ruled the weekend box office.

"At this time of year when we are used to seeing all these Oscar contenders, we forget that something like this can be very popular and take the No. 1 spot at the box office," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box office tracker Exhibitor Relations.

"People must really be in the mood to laugh."

Among films expected to do well at the award shows, *The Hours*, starring Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman and Julianne Moore, earned an estimated \$4.7 million in its fourth week, for a total of \$7.4 million.

Released by Paramount Studios in late 2002, *The Hours* broadened to 402 theaters and took in an estimated \$11,754 per-screen.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers is expected to surpass the \$300 million mark today, becoming the third movie released in 2002 to do so.

The Top 10 movies Friday-Sunday, according to studio estimates, were:

1. *Kangaroo Jack*, \$17.7 million.
2. *National Security*, \$15.7 million.
3. *Just Married*, \$12.5 million.

4. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, \$11.4 million.

5. *Catch Me If You Can*, \$11.3 million.

6. *Chicago*, \$8 million.

7. *A Guy Thing*, \$7.1 million.

8. *About Schmidt*, \$6.3 million.

9. *The Hours*, \$4.7 million.

10. *Two Weeks Notice*, \$4.1 million.

For final box-office standings, see Thursday's Preview section.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1841, the island of Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain. (It returned to Chinese control in July 1997.)

In 1942, Nazi officials held the notorious Wannsee conference, during which they arrived at their "final solution" that called for exterminating Jews.

In 1981, Iran released 52 Americans it had held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan.

In 1986, the United States observed the first federal holiday in honor of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

In 1998, a jury was selected in Amarillo to hear a multi-million-dollar lawsuit filed by Texas cattlemen against talk show host Oprah Winfrey over comments made on her program concerning beef safety. (Winfrey later won the case.)

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Country singer Slim Whitman is 79. Actress Patricia Neal is 77. Former astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin is 73. Actress Dorothy Provine is 66. Singer Eric Stewart is 58. Movie director David Lynch is 57. Rock musician Paul Stanley (KISS) is 51. Rock musician Ian Hill (Judas Priest) is 51. Actor Daniel Benzali is 53. Comedian Bill Maher is 47. Actor Lorenzo Lamas is 45. Country singer John Michael Montgomery

is 38. Actress Stacey Dash is 36. TV personality Melissa Rivers is 35. Singer Xavier is 35. Actor Skeet Ulrich is 34. Singer Edwin McCain is 33. Rock musician Rob Bourdon (Linkin Park) is 24.

CALENDAR

5K RUN: Early registration for the AIG American General Fine Arts 5K Run benefiting the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston continues through Jan. 25. The Feb. 1 event begins at 7:55 a.m. for wheelchairs, 8 a.m. for runners and 8:05 a.m. for walkers in front of the MFAH Law Building, Bissonnet at Main. Call 713-639-7585 or visit www.mfah.org.

JOKES ON US

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost, reduced altitude and shouted to a woman on the ground: "Can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The woman replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering about 30 feet above the ground. You're 30 to 31 degrees north latitude and 95 to 96 degrees west longitude."

"You must be an engineer," said the balloonist.

"I am," she said. "How did you know?"

"Everything you told me is correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information and I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip," said the balloonist.

"You must be in management," she said.

"I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did *you* know?"

"You don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault," she replied.

-- Submitted by Starr Boone, Houston

IT'S FREE

`FUNDAY': "Funday in the Park" will feature sporting activities, face-painting and karaoke noon-5 p.m. Sunday at Judson Robinson Park, 1422 Ledwick.