



Hometown Hesperia

By Hillary Borrud

Weekend fire still on everyone's mind

The smell of smoke still hung over the Mesa when I visited Tuesday, but the neighborhood was quiet after the Las Flores fire crept up to its edges this weekend.

Rumors that the San Bernardino County Fire Department could have done more to contain the blaze were still smoldering, however, causing Mayor Pro Tem Mike Leonard to go to Wednesday night's City Council meeting prepared.

"A lot of people were unhappy because there weren't a lot of aircraft available."

MIKE LEONARD
Mayor pro tem

Many aircraft were under maintenance at the time of the fire.

Leonard said before the county Fire Department took over service in the city, the former Hesperia Fire Department opposed the city's annexation of Summit Valley land because it was too large of an area to cover with their available resources.

The mayor pro tem spent Saturday, when the fire started, and Sunday working with city staff and the Fire Department to keep people away from the area and talk to residents.

One problem was that the city does not maintain Las Flores Ranch Road, Leonard said, which would have been one way to reach the fire. The Fire Department also does not have keys to gates on roads along the California Aqueduct, which would have provided another route to the fire.

If people want to keep their homes safe, Leonard said, they need to trim trees and brush around their homes: Several houses near the fire had junipers and other cypress growing right next to them.

At Wednesday's City Council meeting, the Hesperia Chamber of Commerce announced that it had hired a new executive director, Yvonne Woytovich.

The Chamber created the new position as part of its plan to offer more services and establish more professional procedures in order to keep up with a growing population. The city chipped in \$35,000 in December to raise its annual funding for the chamber from \$25,000 to \$60,000.

Most of this increase will go to the new director's salary. According to a staff report from that City Council meeting, the new executive director will receive \$30,000 from the city and \$50,000 from the Chamber.

If you have a question about Hesperia, e-mail Hillary Borrud at hborrud@vvdaily.com or call her at 951-6234. Hometown Hesperia is part of a rotating column that focuses on a different Victor Valley city each week.

Check scam leads to \$10K in meth

Suspect remains at large, but deputies find drug supply at his house

By KATHERINE ROSENBERG
Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE — Free methamphetamine for the use of your checking account may sound like a good deal — if you're under the influence.

A local man was reportedly supplying his friends with meth if they would agree to cash checks from him. They were unaware that he was creating the checks on his computer and ripping them off in the process, said Deputy Kristina Winegar of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Victorville station.

It all came to light when a representative of American Security Bank told an employee at Victor Valley towing that they were overdrawn by about \$3,200,

Winegar said. "The last check they had written was to the tax board, and they shouldn't have been overdrawn," Winegar said.

But the bank said another check was paid out, with a check number the company had not even reached yet. They notified authorities, who launched the investigation.

It led them to Sergio Alluin, a suspect who has not yet been arrested. Alluin's family owns an accounting and tax preparation business in Fontana.

Winegar said they are looking into the possibility that the business is how Alluin came to make a phony copy of a Victor Valley Towing check, but that has yet to be confirmed.

"The original check never got to the tax board, so we don't know if he com-

mitted mail fraud, or if he had access to it through the business," Winegar said.

When detectives served a search warrant at Alluin's home in the 17800 block of Sultana Avenue around 8:27 p.m. Tuesday they found 4.3 ounces of methamphetamine, capable of yielding more than \$10,000 on the streets, officials said.

They also recovered several IDs and seized his computer to determine how many phony checks he has produced.

For now, Winegar is aware of nearly \$6,000 in phony checks that Alluin has allegedly cleared.

"He's laundering money through their checking accounts, and his friends were going to be the ones taking the fall for all this when the bank caught on that the checks were fake. Now he's in the wind," Winegar said.

"He's laundering money through their checking accounts, and his friends were going to be the ones taking the fall."

DEPUTY KRISTINA WINEGAR
San Bernardino County Sheriff's
Department Victorville station

Alluin's wife, Maria Alluin, was arrested following the search warrant on suspicion of possession of methamphetamine for sales and was booked at the Victor Valley Jail.

The District Attorney is expected to file charges on Sergio Alluin in order to obtain a warrant for his arrest.

Katherine Rosenberg can be reached at 951-6276 or by e-mail at krosenberg@vvdaily.com.

Local congressman tours facility that focuses on aerospace research and design

The 'Buck' stops in Adelanto



Michael Stenerson / Staff Photographer

Congressman Howard 'Buck' McKeon, second from left, listens as Eric Schmidt, left, of Exquadrum, talks about one of the company's research projects at the business in Victorville on Wednesday afternoon.

Rep. Howard McKeon visits area defense contractor

By RYAN ORR
Staff Writer



Michael Stenerson / Staff Photographer

Congressman Howard 'Buck' McKeon talks about his visit with President Bush on Wednesday afternoon.

After spending the afternoon with President Bush, Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Santa Clarita, took a tour of a local defense contractor facility.

Exquadrum is an aerospace and defense research company with the highest revenue of any company of its kind headquartered in the High Desert.

"You learn a lot by getting out of Washington and listening to real people and seeing real people," said Bob Haueter, deputy chief of staff for McKeon.

The company — which is run by Kevin Mahaffy and Eric Schmidt, better known as the Rocket Guys — has been operating in Adelanto for four years and earned more than \$1 million in revenue last year.

"I do this a lot because I enjoy it. I'm curious about what people do," said McKeon who serves on the House Armed Services Committee. "No two days are alike."

McKeon's 25th District includes Victorville and Adelanto.

Although Exquadrum is small compared to the larger defense contractors such as Boeing and Lockheed,

BUCK/B2

Mail Masters robbed at gunpoint

Employees hands duct taped behind their backs at Stater Bros. shopping center

By KATHERINE ROSENBERG
Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE — As the gun-brandishing robber forced her to the ground and duct taped her hands behind her back, the owner of Mail Masters thought of one thing — her 11-year-old son who was in a back office of the store.

"I was just worried about my son. He came in with me, but I didn't see him. I didn't know if he got out, and I can't even whisper his name, because what if (the robber) found out there's another person over there? I'm just glad he didn't try to run out," said the co-owner Gina, who asked to be identified only by her first name for fear of retaliation. "I'm just grateful that nothing happened to my son."

Mail Masters in the Stater Bros. shopping center at Bear Valley and Amethyst roads was robbed at gunpoint around 9:26 a.m. Wednesday, said Karen Hunt, spokeswoman for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Victorville station.

Five people — two customers, two employees and Gina — had their hands duct taped as the two robbers emptied out the cash registers and eventually the safe, which is when they came face-to-face with the young boy.

"My son surprised (the robber) a little. He didn't know there was someone in the back but he didn't touch my son, he just wanted in the safe," Gina said. "I got a good look at the gun and I knew it was real, so I just did anything they said."

Moments later the two men had left the store and the authorities had arrived to take a report.

Detective John Walsh said that it was two black men, 18 to 25, about 6 feet to 6 feet 2 inches tall, both with slim-to-medium builds that robbed the store.

The men are still outstanding with about \$15,000 that they stole from the store, he said.

Walsh described the weapon used only as a handgun. Mail Masters remained open throughout the day and Gina said she will continue running the business. Still, the experience is not something she will forget anytime soon.

"I'm thinking either I close it, or what am I going to do if I close it? I'm just going to sit in the house thinking about it, I'm just going to have a nightmare," Gina said. "If I keep myself busy, I think that's better for me."

Anyone with information as to the identity or whereabouts of the robbers is asked to contact Detective Walsh or Deputy Rick Runstrom at 241-2911.

Information can also be left anonymously by calling (800) 78-CRIME. WeTip informants are eligible for up to \$1,000 should their information lead to an arrest and conviction.

Man pulled from wreck moments before train hits

By KATHERINE ROSENBERG
Staff Writer

HESPERIA — When you drink and drive, going to jail is certainly not the worst thing that can happen.

A local man was lucky to escape a car accident with his life late Tuesday night after he crashed into a car and ended up on the railroad tracks — with a speeding train headed right at him.

"By the time he was out and we checked the vehicle to make sure no one else was inside, that's when I saw the train coming," said Sgt. Dale Cunningham of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Hesperia station.

"So at that point I knew we were in trouble, and all we could do was clear everybody out of the way. It was the anticipation of it coming down the tracks. When

What do you think?

Post your comments below this story at www.VVDailyPress.com.

it was maybe 100 yards out, we knew it was going to be something else," he said.

Onlookers and deputies were able to pull Emanuel McCarey, 57, of Hesperia out of his vehicle about a minute before the 7,717-foot BNSF train slammed into it at 55 mph, scattering vehicle debris everywhere, said Roxanne Walker, spokeswoman for the Hesperia station.

Around 10 p.m., McCarey was traveling eastbound on Walnut Street at Hesperia Road when he failed to stop at the stop sign.

He crossed through Hesperia Road, hit a trench on the east side

CLOSE CALL/B2

MEGAN'S LAW SEX OFFENDERS IN VIOLATION



NAME: Solis, Valentino
Last known address:
22300 block of Hurons Ave.
Apple Valley, 92307
Date of Birth: 02-11-1966
Sex: Male
Height: 5'8"

Weight: 160 lbs.
Eye color: Brown
Hair color: Red
Ethnicity: Hispanic
Known Aliases: Valentino Soliz

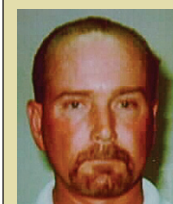
OFFENSES
Offense Code: 288(a)
Description: Lewd or lascivious acts with child under 14 years



NAME: Cardenas, Edward
Last known address:
14200 block of Apple Creek Dr.
Victorville, 92392
Date of Birth: 07-01-1961
Sex: Male
Height: 5'11"

Weight: 175 lbs.
Eye color: Brown
Hair color: Brown
Ethnicity: Hispanic
Known Aliases: Eddie Cardenas, Edward Anthony Cardenas

OFFENSES
Offense Code: 261(2)
Description: Rape by force



NAME: Young, David Lynn
Last known address:
11200 block of Anderson Ranch Rd., Phelan, 92329
Date of Birth: 10-13-1956
Sex: Male
Height: 5'9"

Weight: 175 lbs.
Eye color: Green
Hair color: Brown
Ethnicity: White
Known Aliases: David L. Young

OFFENSES
Offense Code: 288(a)
Description: Lewd or lascivious acts with child under 14 years

Anyone with information on any of these individuals can contact sheriff's dispatch at 245-4211. This information on registered sex offenders is prepared by the California Department of Justice as required by state law. For more details, visit Megan'sLaw.ca.gov. Offender profiles appear every Tuesday and Thursday.

OBITUARIES



JACKMAN

DAN JACKMAN

Retired U.S. Marine Corps 1st Sgt. Dan L. Jackman, 77, died Friday, March 30, 2007, in Victorville.

Dan was a loving husband, father, grandfather and friend, as well as a proud Marine. He was loved and respected by all who knew him and his presence in our lives will be greatly missed. He will be remembered as a man of great honor, integrity and tremendous strength of character who profoundly influenced our lives.

He was born into a loving family in 1929 in Joseph, Utah. The sixth of eight children, he was a high-spirited boy who enjoyed a happy childhood full of many adventures in "his mountains" of southern Utah.

He entered the U.S. Marine Corps in 1946 on his 17th birthday. Following the end of World War II, Dan served aboard the USS Manchester in the Mediterranean Sea. During the Korean War, he served with Able Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Division in the infantry as unit leader under Capt. Robert H. Barrow, taking part in battle at Chosin Reservoir, Hill 1081, and Horseshoe Ridge Campaigns. He received three purple hearts for combat wounds in Korea. He served in the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1966 and received his

fourth and fifth purple hearts for combat wounds during Bloody Utah Operation as Mike Company gunnery sergeant. He was selected Marine Corps Drill Instructor of the Year in 1958. He retired as a first sergeant and received a combined total of 24 medals and commendations.

He married Patricia Ann Herick of Nampa, Idaho in May 1953. Dan and Pat Jackman shared 29 happy years of marriage and raised two children, Mike and Vicki, in Oceanside before Pat's unexpected death in 1982. While living in Oceanside, Dan entered civil service with the U.S. Postal Service, a second career that suited his outgoing personality and uncanny ability to make friends wherever he went.

Dan was fortunate to find love a second time and married Joanna Bartels from Des Moines, Iowa, in 1983. He welcomed her two adult children Keith Bartels and Meadow Goodrich into the family and loved them as his own.

Dan retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 1990 and enjoyed his retirement years with his wife of 24 years, Joanna. They traveled together and welcomed countless young people into their home, building up a large, extended family of adoptees who came to call them "Mom and Dad" or "Grandpa and Grandma".

Dan and Joanna were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and were called to serve two senior missions, the first in Carlsbad and the second in Ontario, Canada. Dan served in three different bishoprics among his many other church callings.

Throughout his retirement, Dan frequently lectured at Camp Pendleton and to other Marine Corps units. He took part in the Veterans Day program at King High School in Riverside for seven years. One of the interviews from that program is now archived in the Veterans History

Project of the Library of Congress. He was also a guest speaker for many civic organizations. In 2003, he was named honorary grand marshal of the Veterans Day parade in Long Beach.

He was a proud member of the A-1-1 Association of Marine Corps Korean War Veterans, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the First Marine Division Association, the Marine House Association-USA, and a charter member of the Spring Valley Lake VFW Post No. 12039.

He is survived by his wife Joanna Jackman of Victorville; son Michael Jackman of San Diego; daughter Vicki Hendricks, son-in-law Craig Hendricks and grandchildren Nicole and Ryan Hendricks of Carlsbad; step-son Keith Bartels of San Francisco; step-daughter Meadow Goodrich and son-in-law David Goodrich of Victorville; siblings Dale Jackman of Taylorsville, Utah; Harvy Jackman of Sugar City, Idaho; Oma Patterson of St. George, Utah; Enid Norton of Spanish Fork, Utah and Renee Johnson of Rexburg, Idaho.

Services will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday at the Spring Valley Lake Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 12100 Ridgcrest Road in Victorville. A viewing will precede the service at 2 p.m. Dan will be buried in his hometown of Joseph, Utah, on Monday.

Desert View Funeral Home in Victorville is handling arrangements.

A "Wounded Warrior of the Corps" memorial fund is being established by the family in memory of retired 1st Sgt. Dan L. Jackman, U.S. Marine Corps. For information, please contact Joanna Jackman at The1stSgtM@netzero.net.

ANGELINE BARTON

Angeline Barton, 84, died April 3, 2007, at her home in Victorville. She resided in Victorville for six years. She



BARTON

was born March 21, 1923, in Rochester, N.Y. and lived in California most of her life.

Angeline worked briefly outside of the home, but was a homemaker for more than 60 years.

Angeline married her husband, Robert on July 29, 1946. She was deeply loved and will be missed by all.

She is survived by her husband Robert F. Barton of Victorville; daughter Eileen Mayo of Apple Valley; son Marvin R. Barton of Victorville; son Barry J. Barton of Hamilton, Ala.; five grandchildren, Lisa Hill, with whom she had a very special relationship with, Michele Russell, Lori Barton, Amy Goethals and Nathan Goethals; and seven great-grandchildren.

Private services will be held at a later date.

Green Acres Mortuary, 11715 Cedar Ave. in Bloomington is handling arrangements.

ROBERT GIBSON

Robert Glenn "Bob" Gibson, 72, died of cancer April 2, 2007, in Colton. He resided in Adelanto for 26 years. He was born January 2, 1935, in Leoma, Tenn.

Robert was retired, had served in the U.S. Navy from January 1953 to December 1954 and was on a bowling league at

Victor Bowl in Victorville.

Robert is survived by his companion Frances Mills of Adelanto; brother Lynn Autry Gibson and his wife, Kay, of Three Way, Tenn.; sister Gwen Rowe and her husband, Jimmy, of Ethridge, Tenn.; children David and Jan Gibson of Richland, Wash.; Wendy and Greg Chianello of Eagle Creek, Ore. and Donna and Jeff Scott of Castlerock, Wash.; step-children Ann and Allen Simpson of Roy, Utah, Christine and John Roebeling of Weston, Mo., Daniel and Stephani Mills of Victorville and Robert Zupkofska of Las Vegas, Nev.; 13 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and a host of nieces and nephews.

Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday at Desert View Funeral Home.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Friday at Desert View Funeral Home Chapel, 11478 Amargosa Road in Victorville with David Beardsley of High Desert Church officiating.

Burial will be at Desert View Memorial Park.

Desert View Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

JOSEPH MEIER

Joseph Edmond Meier, 91, passed away April 2, 2007, in Apple Valley.

Joseph was born in Lexington, Ky. He lived in California since 1956, and resided for 41 years in the Victor Valley area.

He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and was a tailor for 67 years. He was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather and will be missed very much by his family and friends.

Joseph was an avid Lakers fan.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth. He is survived by his daughter Cynthia Gazley of Apple Valley; sons Darren and Richard Meier of California; grandchildren Damon Seidel of Apple Valley, Amber Seidel of

San Bernardino, Andrew Meier of Apple Valley, Cassandra Meier of Apple Valley, Beaonca Meier of Apple Valley, Brittany Meier of Victorville and Breana Meier of Victorville.

Visitation is scheduled from noon to 2 p.m. Thursday at Sunset Hills Memorial Chapel, 24000 Waalew Road in Apple Valley, with a graveside service to begin immediately following the visitation. Pastor Steeve Arseneault will be officiating at the service.

Sunset Hills Memorial Park and Mortuary is handling arrangements.

MARGARET OWENS

Margaret Elizabeth Owens, 84, died April 2, 2007, at St. Mary Medical Center. She resided in Victorville for 33 years. She was born December 29, 1922, in Erie, Pa.

Margaret is survived by her daughter Colleen Foltz of Keller, Tex.; son David Owens of Tulsa, Okla.; son John Owens of Victorville; daughter Gale Simon of Apple Valley and eight grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her grandson Eric Simon.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Monday at First Baptist Church of Hesperia, 9280 Maple Ave., with Pastor Wayne Stockstill officiating.

Burial will be at Desert View Memorial Park, 11500 Amargosa Road in Victorville.

Desert View Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

JOHN BENNETT

John B. Bennett Jr., 77, died April 2, 2007. He was a resident of Apple Valley for 11 years.

Visitation will be at 9 a.m. Friday with services following at 10 a.m. at United Methodist Church, 18623 Main St., Hesperia.

Burial will be at Pierce Brothers Yahalla Memorial Park in North Hollywood.

Victor Valley Mortuary is handling arrangements.

Asia's richest woman, Nina Wang, dies

HONG KONG (AP) — Nina Wang, a pigtailed Hong Kong businesswoman who turned her slain husband's fortune into a real-estate empire that made her one of the world's richest women, has died. She was 69.

Wang's spokesman Ringo Wong said Wang died Tuesday. He did not describe the cause of death, but Hong Kong media reported that Wang had ovarian cancer that spread to her liver and other organs.

Wang's rise to become Asia's richest woman, according to Forbes Asia, had the plot elements of a Hollywood movie — sex, romance, crime and courtroom drama.

Born Kung Yu-sam in Shanghai, Wang moved to Hong Kong in the 1950s with Teddy Wang, who founded the Chinachem Group pharmaceutical company.

Teddy Wang was abducted in 1990 as he left Hong Kong's exclusive Jockey Club. The family paid a \$33 million ransom but he was never returned.

Several of the kidnapers were caught and said that the 56-year-old Wang had been thrown into the sea from the sampan — a small Chinese boat — where he was held.

His body was never found and he was declared dead in 1999.

Nina Wang insisted that she believed Teddy Wang was alive and would someday return. He had been kidnapped seven years earlier and released for \$11 million ransom.

In her husband's absence, Nina Wang built Chinachem into a massive private property developer, with office towers and apartment complexes throughout Hong Kong. Forbes magazine ranked

her this year as the world's No. 204 richest person, with a fortune of \$4.2 billion.

Wang captivated the public with her pigtailed and garish, girlish outfits. She was nicknamed "Little Sweetie," the Chinese name of a princess-like character from a Japanese fairy-tale cartoon.

But Wang's standing came under threat when her father-in-law, Wang Din-shin, challenged her claim to his late son's fortune.

Wang Din-shin, who is in his 90s, said he was the sole beneficiary of Teddy Wang's estate, based on a 1968 will.

He questioned a will dated a month before his son disappeared, which left everything to Nina Wang. All four documents in the will contained the handwritten message, "one life, one love," in English on papers that were otherwise in Chinese.

Buck: Facility can conduct tests on-site

FROM B1

they have had some important breakthroughs.

"We're four times as good so we have to work six times as hard to get contracts," said Mahaffy.

They have invented a way to defeat chemical weapons without dispersing them in the atmosphere.

"The only chemical weapons injuries in the Gulf War were

self-inflicted," said Mahaffy.

The company has developed a fuel that burns at more than 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit and melts all chemicals instead of blowing them up and exposing them to soldiers.

"We're trying to get in a position to get out and say, 'This is what we're capable of,'" said Schmidt.

At their 10,000-square-foot fa-

cility they are capable of creating new technologies and testing them on-site.

"We build it, test it, validate it, break it, then build it and test it again," said Schmidt.

Exquadrum gets about 100 proposals for defense contracts a year.

Ryan Orr may be reached at 951-6277 or rorr@vvdailypress.com.

Close call: Train was delayed for unknown time

FROM B1

of Hesperia Road and came to rest on the BNSF Railroad tracks, Walker said.

He was later found to have been driving under the influence of alcohol, Walker said.

"He failed to negotiate the stop sign at Santa Fe, went through it at 50 to 55 mph and went through a ditch and still had enough momentum to launch onto the tracks," Cunningham said. "He was so intoxicated that

he kept wanting to get back into his vehicle."

Lena Kent, spokeswoman for BNSF, said the train was en route to Memphis from Los Angeles at the time of the crash. She said there were various types of freight on the train.

She said the train was delayed, but the extent of the delay was unknown.

BNSF and the sheriff's station are conducting investigations. McCarey was booked

into the Victor Valley Jail on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol.

"It just obliterated the car when it struck. The vehicle went up into the air. The engine was dislodged and flew out in another direction," Cunningham said. "It was unbelievable."

Katherine Rosenberg can be reached at 951-6276 or by e-mail at krosenberg@vvdailypress.com.

'A Christmas Story' director Robert Clark and his son die in Los Angeles car crash

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Film director Robert Clark, best known for the holiday classic "A Christmas Story," was killed with his son Wednesday in a head-on crash with a vehicle steered into the wrong lane by a drunken driver, police and the filmmaker's assistant said.

Clark, 67, and son Ariel Hanrath-Clark, 22, were killed in the accident in Pacific Palisades, said Lyne Leavy, Clark's personal assistant.

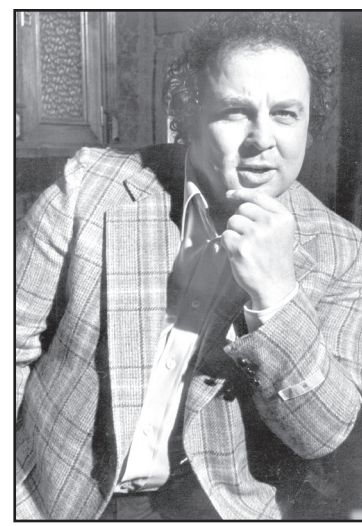
The two men were in an Infiniti that collided head-on with a GMC Yukon around 2:30 a.m. PDT, said Lt. Paul Vernon, a police spokesman. The driver of the other car was under the influence of alcohol and was driving without a license, Vernon said.

The driver, Hector Velazquez-Nava, 24, of Los Angeles, remained hospitalized and will be booked for investigation of gross vehicular manslaughter after being treated, Vernon said. A female passenger in his car also was taken to the hospital with minor injuries and released, police said.

In Clark's most famous film, all 9-year-old Ralphy Parker wants for Christmas is an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle.

His mother, teacher and Santa Claus all warn: "You'll shoot your eye out, kid."

A school bully named Scut



The Associated Press / File photo
Director Robert Clark poses for a photograph in 1979 in Los Angeles.

Clark specialized in horror movies and thrillers early in his career, directing such 1970s flicks as "Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things," "Murder by Decree," "Breaking Point" and "Black Christmas," which was remade last year.

His breakout success came with 1981's sex farce "Porky's," a coming-of-age romp that he followed two years later with "Porky's II: The Next Day."

In 1983, "A Christmas Story" marked a career high for Clark. Darrin McGavin, Melinda Dillon and Peter Billingsley starred in the adaptation of Jean Shepherd's childhood memoir of a boy in the 1940s.

The film was a modest theatrical success, but critics loved it.

In 1994, Clark directed a forgettable sequel, "It Runs in the Family," featuring Charles Grodin, Mary Steenburgen and Kieran Culkin in a continuation of Shepherd's memoirs.

In recent years, Clark made family comedies that were savaged by critics, including "Karate Dog," "Baby Geniuses" and its sequel, "Superbabies: Baby Geniuses 2."

Among Clark's other movies were Sylvester Stallone and Dolly Parton's "Rhinestone," Timothy Hutton's "Turk 182!", and Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd's "Loose Cannons."

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IN BRIEF

Adams gas tax cut could save families \$300 a year

SACRAMENTO — Assemblyman Adams, R-Hesperia, has introduced a bill to remove the double tax on gasoline that is currently being paid by motorists at the pump.

“By eliminating the government’s ability to tax us on the taxes they already impose on gasoline, motorists would get immediate relief at the pump, saving an average of 15 cents per gallon,” said Adams.

The legislation fulfills one of Adams’ campaign promises.

The current average statewide price for a regular gallon of gasoline is \$3.23, an 8-cent increase from last week and nearly a 50-cent increase from one year ago. Of that statewide price per gallon, the average sales tax accounts for nearly 8 percent.

“By eliminating the government’s ability to tax our taxes, an average California family could easily save over \$300 a year,” said Adams.

Current law states that State and Federal sales taxes are added to the base price of gasoline. From that resulting price, the local sales tax is added. Assembly Bill 397 would require the local sales tax be calculated based on the base price of the gasoline only and would prohibit the taxation of the included State and Federal taxes added to gasoline purchases.

Cable TV service restored after planned outage

VICTORVILLE — Cable television service was knocked out to parts of Victorville Wednesday morning.

Craig Watson, vice president of communications for Charter Communications said it was a planned power outage that lasted far longer than anticipated.

Because of a new development in Victorville, the city asked Charter to move some of its main fiberoptics underground. Watson said customers were warned about the planned outage, which was supposed to take place between midnight and 5 a.m.

By 10:30 this morning 75 percent of the customers had their service restored. At 12:55 p.m. 90 percent had their services working again.

Watson said it originally affected about 500 video customers, 2,000 phone customers and 2,500 high-speed Internet customers.

Caltrans wants to halve 3-hour freeway cleanups

RIVERSIDE — State highway officials want to halve the average 3 hours, 6 minutes it takes to clear freeways after major accidents.

“We’re setting the bar very high,” Will Kempton, director of the California Department of Transportation, told first responders, traffic analysts, trucking firms and tow truck operators during a Riverside Convention Center conference on Tuesday.

“Last year our average clearing time per accident was 3.1 hours, and that’s down from 5.6 hours in 2003. That’s a 45 percent improvement,” Kempton said. The goal now is to clear all incidents in 90 minutes.

“Ninety minutes is the least we can do for the public,” California Highway Patrol Commissioner Mike Brown said.

— Compiled from staff reports

Mothers' and sons' day of fun



Photos by Eric Tom / Staff Photographer



ABOVE: Annette Kinney, right, dunks her son Chandler, a third-grader at Baldy Mesa Elementary, during the Second Annual Mother and Son 'Fun in the Sun' picnic on Wednesday. The Parent Teacher Association sold close to 300 tickets to the event, which aims to get moms and their sons involved together. LEFT: Theresa Riess competes in a water balloon tossing game with her son John, a fifth-grader at Baldy Mesa Elementary, during the picnic.

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Vet files claim after wrong testicle removed at hospital

LOS ANGELES (AP) — An Air Force veteran filed a federal claim after undergoing an operation at a Veterans Administration hospital in which a healthy testicle was removed instead of a potentially cancerous one.

Benjamin Houghton, 47, was to have had his left testicle removed on June 14 at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center because there was a chance it could harbor cancer cells. It also was atrophied and painful.

But doctors mistakenly removed the right testicle, according to medical records and the claim, which seeks \$200,000 for future care and unspecified damages.

“At first I thought it was a joke,” Houghton told the Los Angeles Times. “Then I was shocked. I told them, ‘What do I do now?’”

Houghton, his wife, Monica, and their attorney, Dr. Susan Friery, said they hoped to get the VA’s attention by going public with the situation.

The claim was filed on Aug. 8 under the Federal Tort Claims Act. If it is denied, Houghton can sue the government in a federal court, Friery said.

Dr. Dean Norman, chief of staff for the Greater Los Angeles VA system, has formally apologized to Houghton and his wife.

“We are making every attempt that we can to care for Mr. Houghton, but it’s in litigation, and that’s all we can tell you,” he said. Norman added that the hospital has made changes in practices as a

result of the case.

The mistake appeared to result from a series of missteps, according to Houghton’s medical records.

First, a consent form said the right testicle was to be removed and a left vasectomy performed, when it should have been the opposite. Records do not say who prepared the form. It was signed by both Houghton and the surgeon, John T. Leppert, a fifth-year University of California, Los Angeles, medical resident.

Houghton’s wife said her husband did not have his glasses so he could not read it.

Next, the surgical site was to be marked with a pen.

Houghton said he was asked to identify the surgical site and pointed to his left testicle, but no one marked it. Houghton’s records don’t mention a mark.

Finally, the VA hospital required that a “time-out” be taken in the operating room to double-check that doctors were targeting the correct site, doing the correct procedure and operating on the correct patient.

The medical records show that a time-out was called, but it’s unclear whether medical personnel consulted any document besides the erroneous consent form.

Houghton still hasn’t had the other testicle removed.

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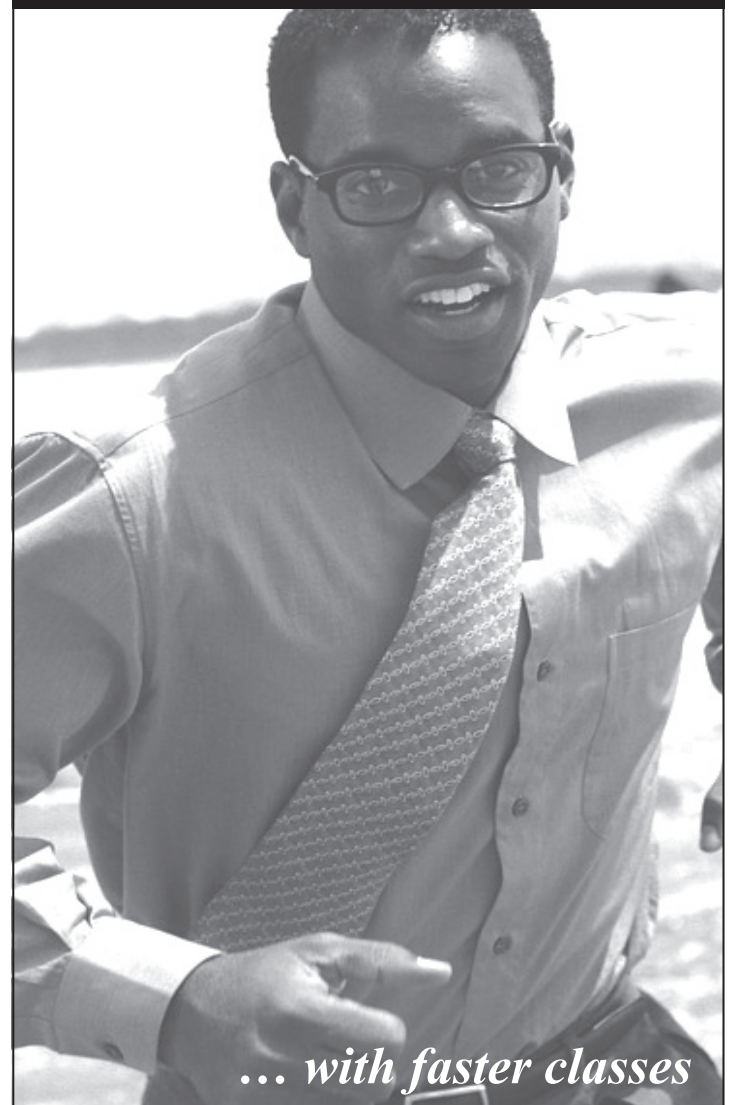
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