

IN BRIEF

Tell us your favorite Christmas memory

VICTORVILLE — The Daily Press is asking readers to share their favorite story of Christmases past.

Whether you welcomed home a long-awaited loved one or took the opportunity to help someone in need, or witnessed others' generosity, the Daily Press wants to know before Sunday.

Call Tatiana Prophet at 951-6222 or e-mail her at tprophet@vvdailypress.com. Please include a telephone number.

Firefighters collecting toys for Spark of Love

VICTORVILLE — Firefighters are collecting unwrapped toys and sporting equipment until Christmas Eve as part of the annual Spark of Love drive.

Dropoff locations are:
• Any Victorville fire station
• City Hall
• CVS Stores
• K-Frog radio station
• Victorville Harley Davidson dealer.

Monetary donations are also acceptable, and are tax deductible.

For more information, contact the Victorville Fire Department at 245-5312 or 243-1949.

'Tis the season to think about personal safety

VICTORVILLE — Law enforcement officials are offering people a few tips to keep the season merry, bright and most importantly safe.

Here are a few of their tips:

- Don't leave your car running in the driveway or while getting coffee at the local convenience store.
- Never leave a child in a running car alone
- Never leave your purse in a shopping cart unattended.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Put shopping bags or personal items in the trunk of your vehicle; out of plain view.
- Carry purse and shopping bags as close to your body as possible.

Daily Press seeking events to fill 2007 calendar

Is your business, school, church or service organization hosting an event in 2007? The Daily Press is looking for family fun activities to list in a 2007 event calendar.

Send a brief description of the event, along with the dates, time, cost, address and public contact phone number to: 2007 Event Calendar, P.O. Box 1389, Victorville, CA, 92393, or e-mail kjusten@vvdailypress.com.

The deadline for submitting events is Friday. For more information, call 955-5332.

Freezing water runoff can create slippery situation

VICTORVILLE — Winter can be a dangerous time.

Victorville officials remind, the cooler air can freeze runoff from lawn watering onto sidewalks and streets, creating a slippery situation. City officials are encouraging residents to adjust watering schedules.

For more information, call 241-6365.

Log on to send greetings to troops serving overseas

VICTORVILLE — Citizens can send thank you messages to troops abroad via the military Web site www.americasupportsyou.mil.

The site also has military news, video and musical tributes and upcoming military events.

Additionally, the United Services Organization is sponsoring a care-package program. The package costs \$25 and the sender is able to write a personal message or support statement to the service member receiving the package.

Packages include requested items such as phone cards, sunscreen, disposable cameras and toiletries. Visit the USO Web site — www.operationusocarepackage.org — for more information.

— Compiled from staff reports

Gang allegations assist D.A.

Member found guilty on 17 charges, including robbery and kidnapping

By RYAN ORR
Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE — A night that started out as a laptop and big-screen TV sale turned into a home invasion robbery resulting in one man dead and the other facing life in prison.

Frederick Dion Williams, 37, was found guilty on 17 charges involving the robbery including three counts of kidnapping with the intent to commit robbery, each carrying a life sentence. Special firearm and gang allegations were also added to each count and found to be true

by the jury.

According to Deputy District Attorney Britt Imes, Williams and Larry Moore went to a Victorville residence to sell a TV and a laptop. When the buyer changed his mind, the two men pulled out guns and robbed the residence.

"They weren't going to leave without what they came for, which was the money," said Imes.

The event resulted in a foot pursuit where Moore was killed after being shot three times by police. The District Attorney's office brought Williams up on 17 charges including false imprisonment, assault with a firearm, attempted carjacking and criminal threats. Imes said that Williams is part of the 456 Piru

• Frederick Dion Williams was found guilty on all 17 charges he was accused of involving a home invasion robbery plus gang allegations. He faces in excess of 50 years as well as three life sentences.

gang out of Pomona, which is part of the Bloods gang.

"When you have a gang allegation, it is so prejudicial," said Defense Attorney Jim Terrell who represented Williams. "Once you get that title and everything that goes with that, I think it's almost impossible to get a fair trial."

During the trial, five witnesses took the stand and testified that the defendant had a gun; however, two of them refused to identify him in the courtroom for fear of gang retaliation.

Imes said that the gang allegation can be used to the ad-

"When you have a gang allegation, it is so prejudicial. Once you get that title and everything that goes with that, I think it's almost impossible to get a fair trial."

JIM TERRELL

Defense attorney who represented Williams

vantage of the defense and is a great sentencing tool.

"When it is appropriate, it is great evidence of motive and intent," he said. "It explains why witnesses recant or refuse to testify."

Terrell said the gang allegations allow the defense to bring up prior offenses and other things that the jury would not otherwise see.

"At that point the jury is off and running and I don't know how you can stop them," he said.

Imes said that Williams will most likely face in excess of 50 years on top of the three life sentences he will receive for the three counts of kidnapping with the intent of robbery.

"It lets them know that we don't tolerate gangsters here," said Imes. "We're going to punish them more severely when they act on behalf of the gang and terrorize our citizens."

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

Top choice cut

Former air base barber picks up clippers for last time



Michael Stenerson / Staff Photographer

Pat Treglia, an international barber of 68 years, puts the finishing touches on longtime regular Joseph Wessel on Friday afternoon at Patties Beauty Salon in Victorville.

"We're sure not going to get a better barber in this town, that's for sure."

Howard Clark

Retired aerospace machinist and 14-year patron

By ERIK DERR
Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE — On most days for the last 68 years, Pat Treglia has welcomed the sunrise with a comb in one hand and clippers in the other.

The barber from Pescara, Italy, has typically been open and ready for business when most others are reaching to hit

their snooze buttons for the first time.

It was a regimen he learned early in his career — and which comes to an end Sunday.

Treglia, 76, whose given name is Pasquale, is hanging up his barber's smock to spend more time with his wife, Frances, and recuperate from the career he's had since he was 8 years old.

"I'm tired," he said in his still-

rich Italian accent. "I want to see how does it feel to do nothing." He also looks forward to enjoying more of the "beautiful" High Desert environment, which he contends is the best anywhere.

Treglia works his last official shift today, from 5 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Patti's Beauty Salon, 15770 Mojave Drive, Suite J. He still charges \$7 a cut. He gave up of-

fering shaves a long time ago.

Tomorrow will be reserved for Treglia's last few appointments, since he explained, "I usually do them Monday, but that's Christmas."

Since word of his impending retirement was announced, longtime customers have been streaming in for one last

TREGLIA/B2

Proposal for BLM reorganization raises concerns among environmentalists

More than half of managed lands fall in California

By DAVID WHITNEY
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Land Management is considering a reorganization that environmentalists and a bipartisan group of House of Representatives members worry could dilute the agency's protection of millions of acres of conservation lands in the West.

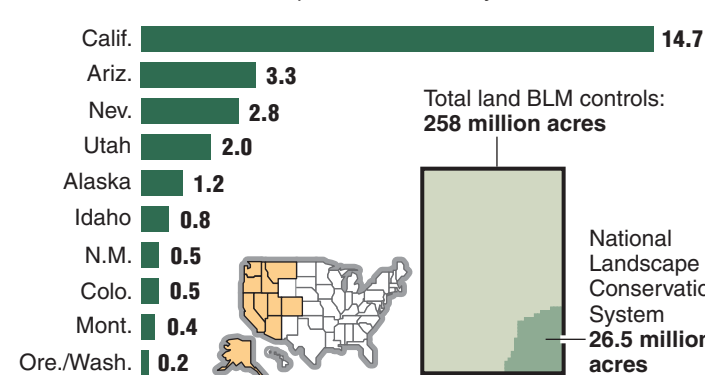
The BLM manages about 258 million acres, and among its traditional workload are mining, grazing and timber programs. But it also maintains about 26 million acres under its National Landscape Conservation System. Much of that is in wilderness or national monuments and conservation areas, with more than half the total acreage in California.

The proposal would bring under the umbrella of the NLCS a variety of unrelated programs that, on paper, could make it seem as though substantially more money is being spent on conservation when on-the-ground spending is actually shrinking.

"We don't want to see this re-

Government land

Number of acres the federal Bureau of Land Management controls under the National Landscape Conservation System, in millions:



© 2006 MCT Source: U.S. Bureau of Land Management Graphic: Lee Hulteng, Judy Treibler

organization that could lead to a holocaust through starvation of the NLCS," said Denise Ryan, a legislative representative for the National Wildlife Federation and member of the National Landscape Conservation System Coalition.

Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill also are raising concerns about the reorganization, which critics charge was hatched in secret and has had no public airing.

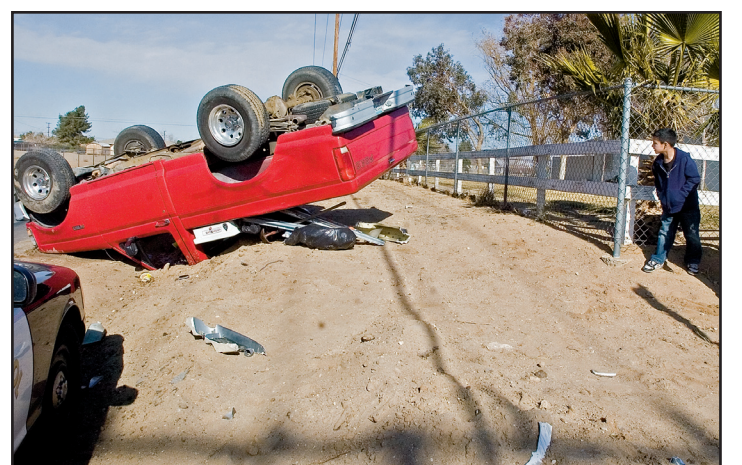
Last week, leaders of the National Landscape Conservation

System Caucus delivered a letter to BLM Director Kathleen Clarke asking that the changes not be adopted until Congress has had a chance to review them.

"These national monuments, wilderness areas, scenic rivers and trails provide uniquely American experiences, valued by millions of our constituents," the letter said. It was signed by Reps. James Moran, D-Va.; Mary Bono, R-Calif.; Rick Renzi, R-Ariz., and Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz.

BLM/B2

Accident inspires curiosity among youth



James Quigg / Staff Photographer

Alex Guerrero climbs his grandmother's fence to get a closer look at a flipped over Ford truck Friday morning. The driver of a Ford Thunderbird stopped at the intersection, failed to see the oncoming truck and proceeded into the intersection, hitting and overturning the truck. No one was seriously injured in the collision.

C O P L O G S

APPLE VALLEY

• A report of an assault was taken around 12:40 a.m. Tuesday in the 12400 block of Central Road after a mother and daughter got into an argument. The mother reportedly held the daughter down, then bit and scratched her face.

• A report of a burglary was taken from the 13600 block of Kiowa Road around 8:44 a.m.

Tuesday. The victim said that her vehicle was broken into in Ontario and her house keys and identification were stolen.

• A report of a grand theft auto was taken in the 13500 block of Yakima Road around 12:06 p.m. Tuesday. The victim stated that a 1978 Ford Bronco with a hard convertible top was stolen sometime overnight.

COP LOGS/B2

OBITUARIES



DAVIS

CATHERINE DAVIS

Catherine Davis, 79, of Victorville, passed away Thursday, Dec. 14, 2006, to be with her husband, the late Dr. George T. Davis.

Catherine was born March 27, 1927, in Cittanova, Italy, to Vincenzo and Maria Forfare.

A beloved mother of six, Catherine is survived by her brother, Anthony Forfare; children and their spouses, Tom and Diane Davis, Maria and Brad Perkins, Jim Davis, Cathy and Jim Upton, Laura and Steven Chapman, Michael and Nina Davis; as well as 11 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and many nephews and nieces.

One of many Depression-era emigrants, Catherine "always knew" that she wanted to be a teacher. Educated in the public school system of Trenton, N.J., Catherine married George Davis Oct. 7, 1951, after which she and he, partners in life and in work, went on to receive their bachelor's degrees at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio.

The couple began their teaching careers in Springfield, Ohio, and then moved to California, along with their then three children, to pursue their interest in helping children learn and succeed. Catherine and George went on to obtain their master's degrees in education from California State University at Long Beach. Catherine further completed Ph.D. level coursework at the University of Southern California.

Catherine, a mentor teacher, a member of various state and local educational committees, as well as adviser for class, newspaper and drama clubs, taught children in grades 3 to 12 throughout her 40 years of teaching. Her career in California began in the Imperial and Orange counties and later moved to the San Joaquin Valley and High Desert. She retired at 72 years of age from Barstow Unified School District.

"Family comes first" was, and is, a Davis motto. Catherine and her husband promoted the strengthening of family bonds with cross-country visits to extended family, initiated family traditions such as cooking Italian favorites on holidays and oral stories of family history and values. Both parents were there for their children whenever they were needed, "24/7." Catherine's role as family "adviser" was promoted by her husband who often said, "Mom is usually right."

Catherine was, and is, to her family and others, a model of success and dedication. We, her children, miss her, but are happy that she is now at peace and with our father. We hope to pass on their wisdom, and promise to always make "family come first."

A private service will be held for family.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations in Catherine's name to the Christian Children's Fund, (800) 776-6767.

LEONOR THARP

Hesperia resident of four years Leonor Silva Tharp, 88, died Dec. 21, 2006.

Family services will be private. Kern Hesperia Mortuary is handling arrangements.

Some obituaries in this section are paid for by families of the deceased, who also provide the information. The Daily Press is not responsible for the accuracy of the information published in paid obituaries. Short death notices are also offered, and these are free of charge.

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'The Jeffersons' actor Mike Evans dies at 57

TWENTYNINE PALMS (AP) — Actor Mike Evans, best known as Lionel Jefferson in the TV sitcoms "All in the Family" and "The Jeffersons," has died. He was 57.

Evans died of throat cancer Dec. 14 at his mother's home in Twentynine Palms, said his niece, Chrystal Evans.

Evans, along with Eric Monte, also created and wrote for "Good Times," one of the first TV sitcoms that featured a primarily black cast.

Michael Jonas Evans was born

Nov. 3, 1949, in Salisbury, N.C. His father, Theodore Evans Sr., was a dentist while his mother, Annie Sue Evans, was a school teacher.

The family moved to Los Angeles when Evans was a child.

He studied acting at Los Angeles City College before getting the role of Lionel Jefferson in 1970s situation comedy "All in the Family."

Evans kept the role of Lionel when "The Jeffersons" launched in 1975. The hit show was a spinoff featuring bigoted Archie Bunker's black neighbors in

Queens who "move on up to the East Side" of Manhattan.

Evans was replaced by Damon Evans (no relation) for four years, then he returned to the series from 1979 to 1981.

He also acted in the 1976 TV miniseries "Rich Man, Poor Man" and made guest appearances on the TV series "Love, American Style" and "The Streets of San Francisco." His last role was in a 2000 episode of "Walker, Texas Ranger."

In recent years he had invested in real estate in Southern California.

COP LOGS

• A man reported getting harassing phone calls from a jealous husband claiming the victim is having an affair with his wife. Deputies took the report from the 16300 block of Nosoni Road around 1:36 p.m. Wednesday as the victim is afraid the caller will

carry out the threats.

• A report of graffiti was taken from the 22000 block of Highway 18 around 3:33 p.m. Wednesday when tagging was found on a wall behind the location.

• A report of assault with a deadly weapon was taken from the 21800 block of Klickitat Avenue around 3:50 p.m. Wednesday. The victim was slashed with a knife several times by her brother after the pair got into a fight.

BLM: Some suspicions arise from Bush's plans to cut funding for conserved lands

FROM BI

"It is critical that this reorganization include responsible oversight and budget commitments, which allow these precious lands to grow and flourish," Bono said in a separate statement.

The BLM hasn't publicly released details of its proposed reorganization. There's no mention of the proposed reshuffling on the agency's Web site.

BLM spokeswoman Celia Boddington said the agency has been reviewing ways that it could be restructured to better serve the public for more than a year. She said the recommendations were presented to employees on Nov. 30.

While many of the changes are bureaucratic, such as centralizing many of the BLM's operations in Denver, the proposed changes to the landscape

conservation program are raising broader concerns about whether the division's core functions could be eroded.

Boddington said the proposal is to move unrelated functions under the NLCS, including education programs and a dispute-resolution program. Others said that a BLM timber program that tries to find ways to save money by sharing facilities with the U.S. Forest Service also would be moved under the NLCS program.

"We believe that by this realignment of functions we will be able to serve all of our public efficiently, including our NLCS stakeholders," Boddington said. "The functions will be complimentary to the mission of the NLCS."

But Ryan said little of the reorganization makes sense to

her or her coalition.

"Why would you put alternative disputes resolution into the National Landscape Conservation System?" she asked. "Is the Bush administration putting these components of the BLM in the same boat so that they can sink it later? We have some concerns about what this means."

Fueling some of the suspicions about the BLM reorganization is the Bush administration's plan to cut funding for the lands conservation program this year.

The NLCS program is operating under a 2006 budget level of \$42 million. The Bush administration had sought to slash that by \$5 million in 2007. But Congress failed to approve a 2007 spending bill for the agency, and it continues to operate at the higher spending level for

fiscal 2006.

In its letter to BLM Director Clarke, the House NLCS caucus asked that the agency do nothing more toward completing the reorganization until Congress is told, among other things, what the financial implications would be on the conservation lands.

"The system already operates with a bare-bones funding and numerous unfilled positions, with no capacity to sustain further cuts," the caucus leaders said.

The proposed reorganization comes at a time when tens of thousands of the conservation lands in California are in transition.

The California lands include the 250,000-acre Carrizo Plain National Monument near the central coast, the 60,000-acre King Range National Conserva-

tion Area south of Eureka, and about 10 million acres of the huge California Desert Conservation Area.

In the Carrizo Plain, the process of writing a management plan is about to resume after a tumultuous year following the suicide of its manager, who in a note blamed her death on a difficult relationship with her superiors. At the heart of the dispute was a difference of opinion over the future of cattle grazing in the national monument.

About 173,000 acres of BLM lands were added to the conservation system this year when Congress enacted a North Coast wilderness bill. In testifying for that bill, BLM said the King Range additions would become the "crown jewel" of the agency's 7.4 million acres of wilderness holdings in the West.

Mayfield's funeral was scheduled for Saturday at First AME Church in Los Angeles.

Treglia: Immigrated to Ohio in 1954 before moving to High Desert five years later

FROM BI

cut, or, at the very least, to thank Treglia for his years of friendly chat and incomparable service.

"He's a damn good barber, a barber from the old school," said Howard Clark, a retired aerospace machinist and 14-year patron. "He takes good care of his wife and business. He's an excellent person."

Clark said illness has kept him homebound for the last three months. But, when he heard Treglia was leaving, he mustered enough strength for one more haircut.

"We're sure not going to get a better barber in this town, that's for sure," Clark said.

Treglia immigrated to the United States in 1954, first cutting in Steubenville, Ohio, and moving to the High Desert five years later to serve as the chief barber at George Air Force Base, until the installation closed in 1992.

After that, he briefly worked at Norton Air Base, until it was announced it would close as well. Then Treglia carved his niche in

"It makes me happy when a customer looks in the mirror and likes my work."

PAT TREGLIA

68-year barber

the shop that is now Patti's.

Treglia says his years at George were his most enjoyable, for the deep friendships and loyal customers he made, along with the environment of order and respect that was maintained at the base.

"I loved it very much there," he said. "They were good to me and I was good to them."

In the late 1960s, he cut the hair of Roy Rogers, whom Treglia remembers as straight-

forward and generous to all.

Dennis Morris, field representative for state Assemblywoman Sharon Runner, and Morris' wife, Judy, stopped by Treglia's shop Friday to share a few more tales from his storied past.

"Like the one when he was 8 and had to cut the blind man's hair," said Judy Morris, with a broad grin.

"Oh, have him tell you about his bike racing," added Dennis

Morris eagerly.

Treglia, who still has a full head of sandy white himself, started his profession at age 8, when his sister, Olga, following her parent's directive, dropped him at the local barbershop.

"Back then you didn't have a choice," he said. "You just worked."

And from that time forward, cutting hair was most of Treglia's life, except for the period he spent his off-hours training for the Italian Olympic cycling team. He was accepted to the squad and was on his way to the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, when a

crash ended his racing career. Later, another injury ended his stint as a professional soccer player.

Throughout his life, Treglia said, the source of his greatest happiness has remained the same.

"It makes me happy when a customer looks in the mirror and likes my work," he said, "and when a customer seeks me out and makes special arrangements for me to cut his hair."

Said Treglia: "It breaks my heart to quit."

Erik Derr can be reached at 955-5358 or ederr@vvdailypress.com.

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Iraqi militant group posts Web offer of truce, tries to recruit Iraqis

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — The purported leader of al-Qaida-linked insurgents in Iraq offered U.S. troops a one-month truce to withdraw from the country without being attacked, according to a speech posted on an Islamic Web site Friday.

The leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, said his fighters were now launching a new offensive — “the offensive of the strong” — that he said would last until the final day of the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha — which should finish about Jan. 3.

Al-Baghdadi depicted his “Islamic state” as growing in support and organization. He listed 20 Iraqi tribes he said had pledged their loyalty and said the “state” had set up Islamic courts that had executed a man and woman for adultery.

He called on former officers in Saddam Hussein’s disbanded army to join, promising to provide them with a salary and house so long as they could recite three “suras,” or chapters of the Quran to prove their Islamic credentials.

It was a first time a tape has been issued in the name of al-Baghdadi. The “Islamic State of Iraq” was declared in October by a coalition of Sunni Arab insurgent groups, chief among them al-Qaida in Iraq. Until now, it Web statements have been put out by spokesmen.

The authenticity of the 20-minute audio tape could not be verified immediately. It appeared on an Islamic Web site known for displaying militant groups’ statements. In Washington, a senior U.S. intelli-

gence official said the CIA was reviewing the tape to determine its authenticity.

Addressing the United States, al-Baghdadi said: “We are announcing today our orders for you, so obey them before you regret it.”

“We order you to withdraw your troops immediately, using troop carriers and aircraft, and taking only your personal weapons. Don’t withdraw any heavy weapons. Instead you should hand over those and your military bases to the holy warriors of the Islamic State,” he said.

He said the withdrawal period should not exceed one month, and during that time “we will allow your withdrawal to proceed without being attacked by explosives or any other form.”

Washington had two weeks to respond to the truce offer, he said.

Al-Baghdadi referred to a warning by U.S. President George W. Bush in an October speech that militants aim to establish an Islamic state from east Asia to Spain. “He spoke the truth, although he is a liar,” he said of Bush.

Al-Baghdadi claimed that Washington had tried to open a channel of negotiation with his group through the Saudi government. But he had rejected the initiative.

“The giant has started to fall. It is looking for an escape and seeking to negotiate with all the other groups and parties,” al-Baghdadi said.

“They sent us al-Salool,” he said, employing an abusive historical term to refer to the Saudi ruling family. Al-Baghdadi

“We order you to withdraw your troops immediately, using troop carriers and aircraft, and taking only your personal weapons. Don’t withdraw any heavy weapons. Instead you should hand over those and your military bases to the holy warriors of the Islamic State.”

ABU OMAR AL-BAGHDADI

Leader of the Islamic State of Iraq

said he had spurned the offer because “we are not ones to negotiate with those who killed our children.”

Earlier this week, the No. 2 in the overall al-Qaida network, Ayman al-Zawahri, issued a videotape that congratulated the Islamic State of Iraq on its establishment and urged other Iraqi insurgents to join it. The tape was broadcast on the Qatari satellite channel Al-Jazeera.

Al-Zawahri also suggested al-Qaida was the real power in Iraq and that the United States should negotiate with it for an American withdrawal.

Al-Baghdadi’s tape appeared aimed at establishing the credibility of the “Islamic state” among Sunni Arabs, locked in increasing sectarian violence with Iraq’s Shiite majority.

Sunni Arab insurgents are not known to outright control territory in Iraq, but they do hold sway in parts of western Anbar province and some towns and villages of Diyala province northeast of Baghdad. In some districts, they have even tried to enforce strict versions of Islamic law on residents.

Al-Baghdadi called on officers in Saddam’s army — “from lieutenant to major” — to enlist in “the army of the Islamic

State.”

“There is one condition: the officer must be able to recall at least three suras of the Quran and be able to pass a test of faith, prepared by the Islamic jurisdiction in his region, to demonstrate the extent of his hatred for the Baath regime and its tyrannical leader,” he said, referring to Saddam and his former ruling party, which was secular.

Al-Baghdadi said those officers who pass would receive a salary, a house and an office “to ensure you live well.”

Al-Baghdadi said the Islamic state had received wide support. He named four other militant groups as adherents and added that insurgents in 15 cities had pledged allegiance. He claimed that 70 percent of Sunni Muslim tribes in Iraq were supporters, and that each tribe and group was represented on the “state’s” Shoura Council, or advisory council.

The state has set up Islamic courts to implement religious law, he said. He claimed its authorities had already executed a man and a woman who committed adultery. They were executed in a public square after Friday prayers, but he did not say where and when this took place.

RELIGION BRIEFS

William & Mary removes cross from chapel

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (AP) — The president of the College of William and Mary has decided to remove a 2-foot-high century-old bronze cross from the college chapel.

College president Gene Nichol ordered the cross to be kept in the chapel’s sacristy so the sanctuary would be more welcoming to all faiths, not just Christians. It can be returned to the chapel upon request.

Nichols said that displaying the Christian cross “sends an unmistakable message that the chapel belongs more fully to some of us than to others.”

The chapel is in the Wren Building, which is used for secular meetings, including annual school-wide events for freshmen and seniors. The College of William and Mary became a state school in 1906.

Mathew Staver, a lawyer with Liberty Counsel, said the decision to remove the cross violated the Constitution’s guarantee of free expression of religion.

Because the cross hung in the chapel for 75 years without complaint, the removal demonstrates hostility toward Christianity rather than the neutral stance required by the First Amendment, Staver said. Staver said Liberty Counsel “is always ready to litigate” if the issue cannot be resolved out of court.

Since the removal, some students and alumni have campaigned to have the cross brought back. Their Web site, <http://www.savethewrencross.org>, includes a petition that has received about 7,000 signatures.

Secret police arrest leaders of ‘Jesus Only’ movement

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian secret police began to raid and arrest leaders of the Islamic republic’s indigenous “Jesus Only” movement, arriving unannounced in the early morning hours Dec. 10 to search their homes in Tehran, Karaj, Rasht and Bandar-i Anzali,

according to Compass Direct, a Christian rights organization.

For five days, several members of the house-church movement were called in for a day or more of interrogations and then released.

But eight remain under arrest, including one woman, the organization reported. According to one source, those arrested have been told they face 10 accusations, including evangelization activities and actions against the national security of Iran.

Beijing police break into the home of missionary

BEIJING, China (AP) — Chinese police and several unidentified people broke into the home of Xiu Ruibin, a house church missionary in Beijing, beat the people in the house and destroyed the furniture, according to China Aid Association.

Another church leader was put under house arrest in Xiaoshan on the eve of the court trial for eight Christian leaders.

“What has happened to the House Church in Beijing, the host city of the 2008 Olympic Games and the capital of China, is a shame,” said Bob Fu, president of China Aid Association. “The upcoming pre-Christmas trial of the innocent Christian leaders in Zhejiang will be regarded by the international community as a litmus test for religious freedom and the rule of law in China.”



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Mark resembling Virgin Mary draws the faithful in Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS (AP) — To the faithful, the Virgin Mary appears as an apparition on a retaining wall attached to Freddy Montero’s garage.

“As soon as you walk up to it, you can feel her presence,” visitor Stacy Veloz said as she stood in the Monteros’ driveway and admired the image, half-hidden behind scrub brush at the edge of a red rock yard.

“She’s trying to touch people that aren’t believers, to say, ‘I’m here. I’m real. What do you think now?’” Veloz told the Las Vegas Sun. “I have the chills right now.”

Montero said he was washing his car early this month at

his home in northwest Las Vegas when he was approached by a woman who told him that the house had burned, but the previous owners were spared a fiery death by the grace of the Virgin Mary.

Montero said he and his wife, Chilee, knew their home was once in a fire. He shrugged off the woman’s comment, but said the woman advised them to look at the wall.

“I am not religious at all, but it seems there is a shadow of her,” Chilee Montero said. “You can see it best at night. I kid you not.”

The couple called their Catholic friends, who visited and spread




the word. Chilee Montero also posted a notice on an online message board.

The gawking peaked at midnight Dec. 11, when a small group gathered to light candles in celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose apparition is celebrated annually on Dec. 12.

Holy images that appear in mundane forms, such as on a grilled cheese sandwich or the side of someone’s garage, must be formally investigated before the Catholic Church will offer any official endorsement, said the Rev. Bob Stoeckig, a Las Vegas Diocese official and pastor at St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Church in Las Vegas.

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