Showtime on the Central Coast

Dan Watson
MUSTANG DAILY

For many years, life has clacked to Paul Lichtman. Life told him to put the law book down. It told him to get fired. It mistakenly made him an actor, even without any prior experience. And it led this self-proclaimed "free-spirited" with a unique belief in destiny to a successful 35-year career in show business as an actor, writer and producer.

Lichtman is the type of guy that might strike up a "show biz" conversation with a six-year-old, a dog or even a tree. It consumes him. His eyes light up, his arms begin to fold with a Broadway flair and he starts to explain everything from acting techniques and proper movie script structures to his real expertise, financing films.

He wears the suit of an investment banker, but he has the kind look of a neighbor. He listens with a calculated demeanor, but talks with the flambouyancy of an actor — his stories are packed with famous personalities, from the time he gave actor Dustin Hofhuan one of his first jobs to the time David Geffen showed him the ropes. During a conversation, he turns a frappuccino into a prop, transforms Splash Cafe into a movie set and makes both himself and his interviewer actors. Lichtman wants to show others his achievements are attainable and that working in the movie business is "truly a dream."

His story is inspiring, with his achievements are attainable and that working in the movie business is "truly a dream." It was the only way it could have happened. Lichtman wasn't born in Hollywood. His dad wasn't a famous actor. In fact, up until age 27, he had never read, written or produced a line on a script.

Instead, he was unhappily trudging through law school at Columbia. "Law school graduates you as an expert of nothing," Lichtman explained. "I really didn't plan to do anything. I knew what I didn't want to do, I didn't want to practice law." After a fellowship with the International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation and stints with Mobil Oil Co., Lichtman was "lured away" by the Singer Co. But it was another dead end. He described his ex-boss in predictable movie fashion.

"He became Mr. Hyde from Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," Lichtman said in reference to the 1931 film about a doctor who transforms himself into a monstrous character. "He then became Mr. Hyde from the 1931 film about a doctor who transforms himself into a monstrous character."

Law and disorder

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Education dean heads education review in Kuwait

James Mellor
MUSTANG DAILY

Universities abroad have begun to look to the Western educational system to set international standards of education. Bonnie Konopak, dean of Cal Poly's College of Education and an expert in accreditation in the United States, recently traveled to one such university in Kuwait to evaluate whether the university was ready to begin the process of attaining international recognition.

"I was asked to go to Kuwait (University) and look at their programs," Konopak said. "They haven't really started (the international recognition) process yet. I went there to see whether they're ready to start this process. To see what policies and planning have been done and what they still need to do before they can officially go through the recognition process."

"It's kind of a consulting type of visit to see where they are," she added. "We want them to be successful as they go through the process, so we need to see if they are ready to get started to go through the process properly."

According to Konopak, Kuwait University is "making good progress" and is only "a year or two" away from beginning the international recognition process. International recognition is a process similar to the accreditation process United States universities must follow.

"Here in the U.S. we have an accreditation process," Konopak said. "There's a national recognition process."

Graphic professionals celebrate International Printing Week

Liz Soteros-McNamara
MUSTANG DAILY

The graphic communication department is celebrating International Printing Week by featuring professional speakers from all over the globe. The week includes a dedication ceremony of new printing equipment.

The international celebration commemorates the birthday of Benjamin Franklin. This year marks the 260th anniversary of Franklin's birth on Jan. 17, 1706.

Graphic industry speakers gave presentations to students about new developments in printing technology as well as the latest encryption techniques. Students attended lectures free of charge.

Department chair Harvey Levenson said the lectures are "a present for our students." Professionals from international companies known outside the print world such as Xerox and Eastman Kodak, as well as companies specializing in printing like Goss and Heidelberg, gave lectures.

Lecture series topics included technology and management involved in printing, imaging, packaging and Web development.

Speakers explained new technology in printing, including the Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID), a wireless tracking device used to locate packages, used by shipping companies. Cal Poly has the ability to print labels with RFID Levenson said.

Ron Schey, a Cal Poly GoD alumus and Government Printing Office employee, explained that RFID technology allows encryption specialists to embed signatures and personal photos into documents like passports to aid in the battle against forgery.
Kuwait

organization called the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, plus each state has its own accreditation. National accreditation in California is voluntary. Cal Poly is working towards national accreditation, and should go up for it in a couple of years.

Foreign universities don't always have a high national standard of education to look to, so more universities are beginning to look at international standards.

"Internationally, they don't have a process like that," Konopak said. "For example, universities in the Middle East have standards in their own country, but they don't have international standards, something that looks beyond their own country's standards. Many universities are moving in that direction ... they want to look to broader, more globalized standards. In some areas, they look to the US for those standards."

Konopak was chosen to travel to Kuwait because of her involvement on the board of examiners for a national education group.

"Several of us have been asked to work with this new agency in Washington D.C. that sponsors all these international visits," she said. "It's called the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education ... what a university like Kuwait University does is contact this center for quality assurance in Washington D.C. and say they're interested in undergoing this international process. They've agreed they're going to meet all the standards that are set up and that they'll bring in reviewers that will look at their programs and see if they're meeting these standards or not."

According to a Cal Poly press release, Konopak performed a similar evaluation at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates in 2003.

Printing

Students attended the lectures instead of going to regularly scheduled classes and had a variety of opinions on their favorite lectures so far.

"The cutting edge technology lecture was the most interesting," said Ashley Wielcan, a graphic communication senior. "I really liked the speaker from Central Coast Magazine," said John Knox, a graphic communication senior. "I didn't know that magazines have to be ready to print every 20 days."

"The freelance graphic design seminar was honest about what to expect in the industry.You're not going to be a millionaire straight out of college," said Jessica Greenwalt, a graphic communications junior. Greenwalt said she enjoyed the seminar and looks forward to the industry despite any financial setbacks.

The graphic communications department dedicated all of the new digital printers that the department received last year in a ceremony on Wednesday to Hewlett Packard and Xerox, who donated the digital printers. The printers were dedicated specifically during International Print Week to commemorate the event at Cal Poly.

Hewlett Packard's sales development and marketing representative, Pete Vorenkamp said that it's "critical to be involved with education and the next leaders."

Vorenkamp said that the donation of the printer represents a partnership and an investment for Hewlett Packard.

"If you can learn, our technology you will be comfortable with our workforce and you will be more efficient," James Huggins, a Xerox sales director, said.

Students understand that concept as well.

"If students are familiar with particular companies they will use them in the future," said Cece Chen, a graphic communications junior.

The department also plans to dedicate a memorial endowment to honor Terry Bell, a former Atascadero resident and industry professional.

The week wraps up with a career day on Jan. 20 for students interested in a career in graphic communication.

Lichtman

That turns into the evil Mr. Hyde after drinking a potion.

Throughout his life, Lichtman has let his fire spirit and "the universe" lead him. When his boss at Singer told him he had to be at work at 9 a.m. everyday — often impossible due to the train schedule — he continued to show up late until his boss "went postal" and fired him.

Lichtman walked straight out of the building and never returned to his office.

"It was at that stage in life that this jobless, 27-year-old disgruntled soul would find his purpose."

"The universe reached down," he says with a happy kick in his voice, "and got me into show business."

Getting started

In Lichtman's apartment, there was a woman held often befriended after a hard day at work. Her father knew the head of the actor's union, who created a position for the down-and-out, yet talented young lawyer.

"You never know who you're going to meet and why you're going to meet them," Lichtman said. "You meet the same people you've been looking for a long time and the right people are there.

At Ashley Famous Agency, Lichtman met plenty of people on their way up. He'd learn to read agreements from a younger David Geffen — the now self-made billionaire and founder of Geffen Records — negotiated contracts for actors Burt Lancaster, Kurt Douglas and Flip Wilson and optioned off a number of Broadway shows.

He married in July of 1970, but returned from the honeymoon only to be immediately transferred to California.

Life had another twist for Lichtman, who by January of 1971 would again be without a job.

Into the pictures

It's a strange paradox, Lichtman's life philosophy. Taxes are all he says, dentistry is boring and planning his life has been, for the most part, unnecessary — yet, he has made a career of pinpoint accuracy as a producer of financial planning for the movie business.

"I believe that life talks to you, for always lived my life that way. Things open up and close," Lichtman said. "I've never been able to plan what's going on in five years or 10 years. Basically, things come up by accident."

Due to an economical downturn in California, 50 percent of the employees at Ashley Famous Agency were let go, including Lichtman.

His wife, Terry Lichtman — an agent as fanatical about the movie business as him — encouraged him to write.

His spec comedy script landed in filmmak­er Garry Marshall's lap ("Pretty Woman," "Murphy Brown," "A League of Their Own"). Marshall was currently producing The Odd see Lichtman, page 7

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If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.
— Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121 AD - 180 AD)

The world is a tragedy to those who feel, but a comedy to those who think.
— Horace Walpole

Wordly Wise

pallor: To be pale; lack of color; unnatural paleness, as of the face.

Favorities

Color: Blue
Article of clothing: Boxers, because I go everywhere in them
Movie: "Men in Black"

If You Could ...
— be any cartoon character which would you be and why?
Bart Simpson, because he doesn't care but he gets his point across.

Either/or...
Summer or winter: Winter
Blondes or brunettes: Blondes tease but brunettes please
Coke or Pepsi: Coke
Boxers or briefs: Yes

Other
Shout out: “To all the larkies and the 2-hundo crew.”

Most over-used phrase: "Anywhooooo?"

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WINTER 2006 EVENTS

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Name: Tom Savage • Year: sophomore
Hometown: Placerville • Major: landscape architecture
State briefs

SACRAMENTO (AP) — A California National Guard battalion returned home after 17 months in Iraq.

The Modesto-based 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment saw some of the heaviest action of the war. About 100 members were injured and 17 killed.

SAN LUIS OBISPO (AP) — An estimated 30,000 cycling fans are expected to descend on the city for the Tour of California bicycle race on the eve of the annual Mardi Gras festivities, another big tourist draw that has a record past.

The city is extending a hearty welcome to fans of the Los Angeles-to-San Francisco bike race Tour of California, but Mardi Gras revelers are getting a different message — stay away.

The bike race hits town Feb. 23 and Feb. 24, the Thursday and Friday before the Mardi Gras' big night on Saturday.

GARDEN GROVE (AP) — An 11th-grader was arrested after he allegedly threatened an aerial photograph of Garden Grove High School and marked it "bomb destination."

The 17-year-old student showed the photo to friends on Friday night and tossed a bomb threat circulated during the three-day Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, police Lt. Mike Hasfield said.

Couple sentenced to prison in chili finger case

Kim Curtis
ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL

SAN JOSE — A couple who planted a severed finger in a bowl of Wendy's chili in a scheme to extort money from the fast-food chain were sentenced Wednesday to prison terms of at least nine years.

Anna Ayala, 40, who said she bit into the digit, was sentenced to nine years. Her husband, James Plascencia, 44, who obtained the finger from a co-worker who lost it in a workplace accident, was sentenced to more than 12 years.

"Greed and avarice overtook this couple," said Superior Court Judge Edward Davila, adding that the pair had "lost their moral compass."

The two pleaded guilty in September to conspiracy to file a false insurance claim and attempted grand theft with damages exceeding $2.5 million.

In a tearful plea for leniency, Ayala apologized to the courtroom gallery and said the scheme was "a moment of poor judgment."

She said she reached March 22 after biting into the fingertip while dining with her family at a Wendy's in San Jose.

Forensic tests later showed Ayala never chopped down on the finger, but she described the incident to television news crews.

"There's no words to describe what I felt. It's sick, it's disgusting," she said in a clip played before sentencing. "Just knowing there was a human thing in my mouth is tearing me apart inside."

Anna Ayala, 41, is escorted into a Santa Clara County Superior Court in San Jose on Wednesday for a sentencing hearing.

Although authorities suspected a hoax — in part because the finger was not cooked — word of the stomach-turning find quickly spread around the world.

The Dublin, Ohio-based fast food chain claimed it lost $2.5 million in sales because of the bad publicity, and dozens of workers at the company's Northern California franchises were laid off.

Denny Lynch, Wendy's senior vice president, asked the judge to send a message that "consumer fraud is a serious crime that demands a severe penalty."

The sentencing followed a 90-minute hearing in which several Wendy's employees testified, including the man who made the chili and the cashier who helped Ayala on the day she made the claim.

"I felt so bad for the fear of what people would think of me," said Hector Pineda, who made the chili and initially came under suspicion. "We are the ones that have suffered."

No Wendy's employee was missing a digit at the San Jose restaurant, and no chili suppliers reported finger injuries at their plants.

In April, Ayala was arrested at her suburban Las Vegas home. Investigators found a pattern of legal descriptions, logon to my.calpoly.edu, click on Mustang Jobs and look under Events.

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Animals not mistreated at Jackson's ranch

LOS ANGELES — Animals are not being mistreated at Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch, federal officials have concluded.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture sent an inspector to the 2,000-acre ranch in Central California last month in response to a complaint from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA based its complaint on European tabloid reports that animals are being kept in substandard conditions.

"I'm unaware of any violations of the Animal Welfare Act at Neverland," Darby Holiday, a spokesman with the USDA in Washington, D.C., said Tuesday.

Brian Oxman, a lawyer for Jackson, welcomed the USDA's determination.

"That's very nice and we appreciate it," he said.

Lisa Walmesley, PETA's captive exotic animals specialist, said the group did not try to confirm the tabloid reports before making its complaint.

"Because Neverland is not open to the public, it's very difficult to get information about the place," she said.

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Supreme Court dodges abortion ruling

Gina Holland
WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court gave New Hampshire a chance to salvage its restrictions on abortion Wednesday, sidestepping for now an emotional subject that is likely to be revisited when a new justice joins the court.

New Hampshire's victory may be short-lived because the justices ordered a lower court to consider how to fix problems with the 2003 law requiring a parent to be told before a minor daughter ends her pregnancy.

The 9-0 decision reaffirmed that states can require parental involvement in abortion decisions and that state restrictions must have an exception to protect the mother's health. It also gave states new ammunition in defending restrictions on the procedure.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote the decision, most likely the final one of her 24-year career. O'Connor, a key swing voter at the court on abortion rights, capital punishment and other issues, is retiring and will step down soon if the Senate confirms nominee Samuel Alito.

The ruling broke little new ground. However, justices said that lower courts in addressing flaws in abortion laws do not have to take the "most blunt remedy," striking down an entire law. Instead, the justices said that "more moderate" options are available.

"In the case that is before us ... the lower courts need not have invalidated the law wholesale," O'Connor wrote. "Only a few applications of New Hampshire's parental notification statute would present a constitutional problem."

New Hampshire is one of 44 states that require parental notice or permission before abortions on minors. The law, which says abortion providers must notify at least one parent 48 hours before performing an abortion on a minor, had been challenged by abortion clinics.

The Supreme Court agreed that the state law could make it too hard for some minors to get an abortion, because there is no special accommodation for someone who has a medical emergency. Minnesota, Missouri, and Wyoming have abortion laws with a similar problem, O'Connor said.

The case returns to the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston, which had ruled that the law was unconstitutional. Civil rights groups predicted that the appeals court would again strike down the law.

"It tells politicians that they must include protections that women's health and safety when they pass abortion laws," said Jennifer Dalven, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Douglas Kmiec, a constitutional law professor at Pepperdine University, said "the state interest in limiting abortion received something significant" in the ruling. He predicted that courts will be less likely to block entire abortion laws in the future.

New Chief Justice John Roberts had recommended the narrow resolution when the court heard arguments on Nov. 30. As the court's leader, he assigned the opinion to O'Connor to write.

"We do not revisit our abortion precedent today," O'Connor wrote in the opening of the decision, the court's first ruling since 2000.

In that 2000 case, O'Connor was the fifth vote to throw out a Nebraska law banning a type of late-term abortion, because the law did not have an exception to protect the mother's health.

David Garrow, a Supreme Court historian at Cambridge University, said he was surprised the court "would choose to resolve this case in a way that may unintentionally have the effect of increasing the amount of future abortion litigation."

O'Connor's departure could leave the court deadlocked on how far states can go in limiting abortion, although there are five other justices who would vote to uphold Roe v. Wade.

Alito was questioned extensively last week during his Senate confirmation hearings about his views on abortion, including the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that declared abortion a constitutional right.

He steadfastly refused to agree with assertions by Democrats that the Roe v. Wade ruling was decided in a way that may unintentionally have the effect of increasing the amount of future abortion litigation.

O'Connor was the fifth vote to strike down a federal ban on a type of abortion pill in 2000. She wrote the opinion in that case, which struck down an entire law. Instead, the justices said the law was unconstitutional.

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I’m old enough to drink, seriously

It admit it, I’m forgetful.

I’ve misplaced my car keys within 20 minutes of a midterm and have left my glasses on the bathroom sink only to bitterly realize it as I’m driving on the freeway and can’t quite make out traffic signs.

Nothing is more annoying, however, than when I forget my ID in an attempt to purchase alcohol. It’s shameful really, knowing I have the proof to finally purchase peach oatmeal and toilet paper, however, because I’m not prepared.

Forgetting my ID in an attempt to purchase alcohol, however, than when I know I have the proof to finally purchase peach oatmeal and toilet paper, however, because I’m not prepared.

If someone looks like they are under 35 will be carded or “Everyone in the group must show ID.” They are unforgiving when I scramble to find my ID, promising I know it.

Local clerks at grocery stores and bars are steadfast in practicing strict alcohol purchasing policies, such as “Anyone who looks like they are under 35 will be carded” or “Everyone in the group must show ID.” They are unforgiving when I scramble to find my ID, promising I know it.

I still can’t purchase a classier drink because my stupid ID isn’t in my wallet. If it wasn’t an innanimate object it would be laughing at me — I know it.

Local clerks at grocery stores and bars are steadfast in practicing strict alcohol purchasing policies, such as “Anyone who looks like they are under 35 will be carded” or “Everyone in the group must show ID.” They are unforgiving when I scramble to find my ID, promising I know it.

My roommate’s beer on the conveyer belt was unrelated to my innocent purchase of peach oatmeal and toilet paper. However, because we were splitting the bill and standing next to each other the relation was clear: I was in a group purchasing alcohol. Surprised but understanding, I took out my wallet to show my ID to allow us to be on our merry way, but I was shocked to find that my ID wasn’t there.

Needless to say, we left Food4Less empty-handed.

I was under the impression that I had it a second ago.

I can still hear the grocer’s firm rejection at San Luis Obispo’s Food4Less last year. It’s their store policy to deny an entire group of customers their purchase of alcohol, even if the alcohol is just for one member of the group, if everyone doesn’t prove to be at least 21-years-old.

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I was under the impression that I had it a second ago.

It’s why I continue to find myself in these predicaments. Unless I can find a reminder method just short of stapling my ID to my arm, I suppose I’ll have to live and learn.

Jeremy Patterson

Book causes a million little whiners

Everyone adding value to their membership during January, whether via the web site or on phone, mail, telephone or at an Express Station is automatically entered in the drawing. Winners will be posted online and in Express.

Jeremy Patterson
Lichtman continued from page 2

Couple television series. "Gary calls me up and says to me 'You're a funny writer. Come in, I want to talk to you about punching up jokes on The Odd Couple,'" Lichtman said.

Marshall referred Lichtman to manager Pat McQueeney, who at the time and until she died was Harrison Ford's manager.

He entered McQueeney's office a writer and left an actor, one of the most fortunate accidents of his life. "She said, 'I'm going to need pictures,'" Lichtman said. "I knew that as a writer you don't need pictures, so she must have thought Gary Marshall sent me there as an actor.'"

Lichtman's career started as a writer and left him an actor, one of the most fortunate accidents of his life. "He entered McQueeney's office a writer and left an actor, one of the most fortunate accidents of his life," Lichtman said.

"I always had the ability to make people laugh. I was always a funny man," Lichtman continued.

As an actor he is hearing and seeing things for the first time even though it's the 40th take ... I picked it right up because I always had the ability to make people laugh. I was always a funny man.

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Musician sends ‘greetings’ to listeners

It may be lofty, but Sufjan Stevens uses a variety of instruments that are sure to please the ears of everyone.

Gino Macaluso

Oh Boy! How the world seems to be taking to this man — from music snobs to hipsters, musicians to wannabes; Heartland Americans to urbanites; punks to emos; creatios to club-goers. Or, to put it simply: Everyone. Just about anyone with ears has heard this man soothe their iPod right out of the doldrums of simplistic Indie Rock and Punk and has had a mini, if not colossal, crush on Sufjan Stevens.

Why no? I mean why the hell not? He has come up with an original sound and possesses the talent to boot. Oh 2003’s “Greetings from Michigan: The Great Lake State,” Stevens’ third album, and first to twist panties and jockstraps worldwide has created a sound that we really haven’t heard before. I tend to think of this music as Blissful Poggo Folk.

This original sound I speak of in jest is, in fact, a dynamic force to be reckoned with. Bands, various types of keyboards, woodwinds, guitars and an eclectic array of percussion find their way onto this unique album. The arrangements that Sufjan creates are complicated yet delicate, rendering the antiquity of a fabbrache egg. Somehow he has managed to combine both the “rural” and the “rocks” into a beautiful marriage that moves to an abnormally blissful beat.

Certain tracks define his achievement to a T. These ultra-progressive, beat-heavy anthems include: “All Good NaySayers, Speak Up!” Or, Forever Hold Your Peace?” “They Also Mourn Who Do Not Wear Black” (For The Homeless In Maskagon)” and “Detroit, Lift Up Your Weary Head! Rebuild! Restore! Reconsider!” Each of the aforementioned songs candidly represents Sufjan’s flagship sound on the album, each resonating with a striking familiarity to the others.

One negative element, however, actually exists in the discovery of Sufjan’s new sound: The repetitive rhythms found amongst the tracks mentioned above. The other major criticism lies deeply rooted with the man’s lisp-ridden, wimpy voice. However pleasing it may be, at times it becomes a little too dandelion in character, creating an unsettled feeling of floating through a ticklish sea of peacock feathers (embellishing the reality of experiences for effect can be fun — try it).

An undeniably worthwhile album, born out of a really talented musician, but is it as good as the fanatics and critics say? There’s a legitimate argument either way, and based upon your personal preferences (like your take on complexity, originality, heart-felt valor or disgust for wispy and wimpy dudes), your conclusion will vary.

Important to no end is the strength of this music, and if one listens to the last track, “Vito’s Ordination Song,” one should understand exactly what I mean.

TRACK PICK:
No. 15, “Vito’s Ordination Song.”

Sufjan Stevens new release ‘Greetings From Michigan The Great Lake State’ is wooing everyone with his abnormally blissful beat.
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OPINION/EDITORIAL

The dance and the sex

There's dancing, and then there's... dancing. There's "gilding, strutting, moving through a set series of movements, usually to music," according to the Merriam-Webster's Desk Dictionary, and then there's "an overtly sexual form of dance performed in clubs and at high school dances," according to urbandictionary.com. Since Webster has been at this dictionary thing a bit longer than the posters on a Web site, I'm venturing to guess that dancing wasn't always the (often awkward) bump and grind of drunk people when "My Humps" by the Black Eyed Peas comes on. But the relationship of sex and dancing can't be denied, and it seems that, as a culture becomes more accepting of sex in the mainstream, dancing becomes dirtier. Let's look back on the ages at the dances of history and determine which era had the hottest sex based on their dances:

320 B.C.
Alexander the Great and his troops storm Babylon and feast their battle-weary eyes on some luscious dancers upon their arrival, both male and female. Clad to cover their naughty bits and not much else, the dancers used their hips, bums and cox-lettes to impress their audience. Very hot.

481 A.D.
Although the maypole dance stemmed from a pagan ceremony of fertility, those who created it seemed to ignore the erotic point of the dance. Performers circle slowly around (get excited...?) a pole with ribbons attached to it. Everyone wears clothes and it's unlikely that anyone got hot and bothered by watching or participating. Less than hot.

1812 A.D.
Any swoony English major with time to kill has to say i have seen the British ministries based on Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" and bemoaned the fact that even Colin Firth couldn't heat up the dancing of that era. While the ornate dresses often involved eye catching cleavage and the pants were just tight enough to see the subtle outline of a package, the dances involved only the most chaste physical contact and impressive but unsexy patterns of movement by couples across the floor. Perhaps thrilling for the Bennett sisters, but pretty frigid by today's standards.

1942
With a bloody war raging in Europe and the South Pacific, kids in the U.S. blow off steam by swing dancing, an acrobatic dance to big band music where fellows throw their girls around and get all jiggy with it. As several of the throwing moves involved direct pelvic contact and the girls wore cute dresses where the undies underneath often made a flip appearance, this dancing earns a relatively sexy rating.

What does the other sex have to say?

The word on the screen

An online column exclusive

Mustang Daily

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What does the other sex have to say?
The fabulous life of America's college generation

Nick Courtney

In 2004, Green Day's front man, Billie Joe Armstrong, was asked in a VH1 interview if he had any words of advice for today's generation. His response was to "lose the Hurley T-shirt and baggy shorts, and be a man for once." I agree with Armstrong's message; stop letting clothes and popular culture define who you are, because it is seen far too often with this generation. Be real, be honest and most importantly, though it may sound cliché, be whoever that may be.

This is not to say that pop culture is evil, but do not let the pressure of it all — what celebrities say is hot or the new cool thing — overwhelm you. Spending nearly $40 on a logo with a T-shirt under it is absolutely ridiculous. The same shirt (also made in China, like everything else we buy in America), can be found for about $35 at Mervyn's.

I am also quite aware that our current generation is like no other. Always preoccupied with talking on cell phones right as soon as you get to class to class with the new S.A. posters. Letters went back and forth arguing the moralistic integrity, please keep opinion section.

The real definition of slander is the oral communica- tion of injurious statements and oral slander, methinks your Slander?) bragging about how you looked up "slander," but still got a hypothesis sucks.

Thefebulous life of American legen
generation
can't concentrate walking from one class to another, with your ongoing banter along with a perfect bone structure among the pornograph-ic image.

Where have all the haters gone?

You were so prevalent last quar-

ter, with your ongoing banter about the "obscene" image on the CPSAlSA posters. Letters went back and forth arguing the morali-
ty of showing cleavage on a college campus. Students went as far as to say that they couldn't concentrate in class because of the pornograph-
ic image.

Well, now it's my turn. I just can't concentrate walking from class to class with the new CPSA- SA ads, depicting topless men flexing their muscles.

Am I to believe that I must have impeccably checked abs and pecs along with a perfect bone structure to be accepted as a Salsa-er? It's not fair that they have to use male images to win over their club. It's against my culture to see topless men anyway.

I am calling for an all-out cam-
pus censorship of these new posters. So who's with me? Let's go on an anti-cleavage/pectoral cam-
paign.

I mean, it's the only option we've got left to save our campus from cleavage-chaos. Right?

Armen Ekmekji

Industrial technology senior

Good coverage on women engineers

I'd like to thank the Mustang Daily for allowing an important point to come through in their Women of Engineering series that the Men of Engineering are awe-
some in their treatment of the female engineers.

A big thank you goes out espe-
cially to the professors and male students of the Mechanical Engineering department. You guys rock!

Thank you for not only accept-
ing me as an engineer, but for your help and your friendship. This shows that respect and equality are no longer ideals we are striving for,

but a reality at Cal Poly. I have never felt out of place in any of your classes or labs. I look forward to work-
ing with you in the industry soon!

With your attitudes, female engineers will soon be as common as female doctors. To the professors,

thank you.

Amber Fitch, 2004 graduate

Opinion or Journalism?

Last week I saw an article regarding a California Universal Health Care bill. I was looking forward to an objective analysis, but what I found was an advertise-
ment.

The article told the potential value of the initiative while omit-
ting the costs and pitfalls involved. This was worthy of the front page? For the sake of your own jour-
nalistic integrity, please keep opin-
ion where it belongs: in the opinion section.

Mallory Tipple, nee Vanderbilt

Agriculture business and wine and viticulture senior

Most celebrities are just pretty faces. They are just as fake as most of the breasts in Hollywood.

From Dave's only

The Mustang Daily is now accepting guest commentaries to run every Monday!

Submit an article, limited to 550 words, by e-mail to mustangdaily@gmail.com. Subject: Guest Commentary

Editors reserve the right to edit for grammar, profanity and length.
Research shows some employees drink on the job

Danielle Novy

LUBBOCK, Texas — The trend of enjoying an after-work drink has a new twist, according to research released in January. 19.2 million U.S. employees are either drinking during the workday or nursing hangovers in the workplace.

A recent study conducted by the University at Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions found that about 15 percent of U.S. work-force drinks during the day or just before going to work, while more than 9 percent have come to work with lingering hangovers.

The study additionally found that those who drink on the job tend to do so infrequently. More than 60 percent of those who admitted to drinking at work reported that they drank alcohol and work less than 9 percent have come to work with lingering hangovers.

Weaver said Michael Frone, the study's principal investigator, wanted to research the topic so he could provide employers with statistics they could use as an aid in launching alcohol prevention programs for their employees.

"Basically the purpose of the study was to investigate whether a problem with drinking in the workplace exists," Weaver said. "Dr. Frone discovered it does exist and he wants to do further research."

The study's findings were the product of a one year research project, which surveyed nearly 3,000 employees between the ages of 18 to 45 in 2002 and 2003. Funding came from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

"People who could find ten sites that would allow them to download anything they need instead of paying for it," junior computer science student Virgil Moore said. "They want to keep up with the security and you can't because you have a copy. You can get it for $70 — the price of a textbook — and the bookstore is really trying to get things at student prices."

We Deliver!

Lunch Dinner (Late)

Piracy widespread among students

Joshua Mandly

POMONA — College students are often blamed for being the largest contributors to software piracy because file-sharing programs make it easily accessible on high-speed campus networks.

With students paying more each year for tuition, gas and textbooks, many do not have money to pay for luxuries like music, movies, video games and computer software.

Coupled with the growth of the technology, students can easily click a button and download whatever they want in a matter of minutes.

"It's not how much people have on their computers that matters, it is how easy it is to get. I know people who could find ten sites that would allow them to download anything they need instead of paying for it," junior computer science student Virgil Moore said.

"I know people who have something like $3,000 worth of pirated stuff on their computer. It's not the best quality for sure, but it is free," said James Traylor, a senior civil engineering student.

Software, music, and video piracy are one of the leading white-collar crimes in the world. Today, 21 percent of software in the United States is pirated, which is considered low compared to the rest of the world.

Other countries, especially in Asia and the Middle East, have software piracy rates as high as 92 percent.

In a newly-released study by the IDC, a marketing intelligence firm, it was stated that between 2004 and 2009, software jobs and taxes have and should the potential to grow 5 percent per year.

However, this could be hindered by the theft of intellectual property. Cal Poly is starting to realize this trend and is making attempts to educate the students about the dangers of illegally downloading commercial software like Microsoft Windows or Microsoft Office.

"There is always a lesson of ethical behavior taught in our computer science programs and other engineering based fields," said Dr. Dale Brum, vice president of Instructional and Information Technology.

"I think the more people know about it the better. I think the problem is societal, in that you have a generation that grew up with computers," said David Johnson, director of Judicial Affairs. "What's happening over time is people get so comfortable with computers and how are accepting of software piracy, we see the same thing with pla­

Drum. It is so easy that they don't see a change here. It is a crime, but it is stealing."

"When we find people doing things like illegal hubs, we try to get them to tell them to knock it off. When people don't respond to (University) we can get involved and I&IT can get involved," Johnson said.

The study's findings were the product of a one year research project, which surveyed nearly 3,000 employees while at work, she said.

"We Deliver!"

More than 40 people volunteered during the first two week­

ends in January. Field work ses­

ions have been from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., on Saturdays and either 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 5 p.m. on Sundays. The work is part of Magic's ongoing habitat management program for Stanford's open spaces, primarily the arboretum — the area between central campus and El Camino Real — and the foothills. Thousands of Stanford students, faculty and staff have volunteered on the project over the past 25 years.

The purpose of Magic's habitat stewardship is to enhance the ecol­ogy of the campus landscape, to demonstrate the benefits of native plants in urban and suburban settings and to pro­

vide hands-on opportunities for people to learn about ecology and care for the natural environment.

According to Magic fellow David Schrom, 2006 is the second year of large-scale grass plantings and the 26th year of oak plantings. By the end of January, Magic plans to have planted 300,000 grasses, for a two-year total of 750,000 plants, for a 25-year total of 2,500.

"Volunteering with Magic is a fun way to be out-of-door, work outside from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. while contributing to the ecol­

ogical integrity of the campus envi­

ronment," Schrom said. "We have a way to care take of your temporary home and to develop more of a sense of place. By participating in this project, students contribute to providing a very valuable — and likely to be emulated since Stanford is highly regarded — demonstration of ecologically sens­

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tenance."

More than 30 years ago, while running in the Palo Alto foothills, Schrom noted that oaks were declining, and young oaks were scarce.

"I realized that the landscape I so much appreciated was changing and wondering what I might act to preserve and protect the qualities that I valued," Schrom said.

Magic plans to plant an addi­

tional 10,000 bunch grass plugs and 30 native California oaks during the next two weekends in January. The organization's habitat stewardship activities continue throughout the year for previously planted trees and assist them in becoming established.

Volunteers are always needed.

Joshua Mandly

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Volunteers are always needed.
Surge in bloodshed across Iraq kills scores of Iraqis and two American civilians

Robert H. Reid

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Insurgents carried out two dramatic ambushes Wednesday, killing 11 people including two American civilians in a roadside bombing in Baghdad and an attack on an Iraqi convoy in the capital.

In the main area near Dujail, police and eyewitnesses said.

More than a dozen other Iraqis died Wednesday in attacks linked to the insurgency.

The increased violence came as efforts are continuing to find the leader of a prominent insurgent group that controls Iraqis, said the attackers seized the two Kenyans.

The two American civilians were killed in a roadside bombing in the southern city of Bai. They worked for the Iraqi company Dycorp and were training Iraqi police. A third American was seriously wounded in the attack, the U.S. Embassy said.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene said two four-wheel-drive vehicles were targeted. The area was surrounded by heavily armed British forces, whose main base is in Bai.

The killings occurred as a joint American-Iraqi investigation was under way to find Carroll, the 28-year-old American journalist who was abducted Jan. 7 in Baghdad. The freelance reporter for The Christian Science Monitor was seen in a video aired Tuesday by Al-Jazeera television.

Al-Jazeera said the silent 20-second video included a threat to kill Carroll in 72 hours unless U.S. authorities release all women detainees in Iraq. U.S. officials said eight women were in security detention and none had been freed as of Wednesday night.

Nevertheless, Maj. Gen. Hussein Carrol in 72 hours unless U.S.

Donors pledge $1.9 billion to fight bird flu

Margie Mason

BEIJING — After a year of unprecedented appeals for money to cope with the Asian and human outbreaks, the world took a deep breath Wednesday, pledging $1.9 billion to battle the bird flu and prepare for a potential pandemic.

The United States alone came up with $334 billion that will largely be used to help poor countries in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam and Indonesia, where the H5N1 bird virus is endemic. The European Union pledged another $261 million, responding with a renewed sense of urgency after the disease killed four children in Turkey.

In the two-day donors conference wrapped up in Beijing, participants were again reminded of the risk China reported eight human deaths.

"Nobody's wishing for more tragedy or more crises, but if the world has a better ability to respond to those, I think that's a good thing," said Jim Adams, head of the World Bank's bird flu task force, who said the $1.9 billion to pledges over three years was a precise step for the international aid community, which often responds to major disasters after they happen.

The World Bank had estimated $1.3 billion of the $5 billion would need to be prepared for a potential global pandemic and to fight bird flu, which has killed or forced the deaths of an estimated 140 million birds, with many countries moving to cull poultry stocks across Asia in late 2003. The virus also jumped from poultry to humans last year, infecting at least 79 people in east Asia and Turkey.

Experts worry the virus could mutate into a form easily spread from person to person, possibly sparking a global pandemic that kills millions. So far, human cases have been traced to contact with sick birds.

David Nabatma, the U.N. coordinator on avian and human influenza, said the international outpouring of support at the conference attended by more than 100 countries showed a determination to try to avert disaster.

"It was quite extraordinary, that we've taken very seriously, to be among the leaders in the effort," she said. "It will be used in coordination with the other donors and with the technical agencies." Large chunks of the total $1.9 billion will go to poor countries where the H5N1 virus poses the greatest threat, including improving surveillance, rapid response and containment mechanisms should a pandemic. flu strain emerge within their borders.

Other money will be used for strengthening laboratories and poultry vaccination programs. The World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health are also providing help.

EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said the EU increased its commitment to $212 million, about $20 million more than last week.

"Never before has humankind had a window of opportunity to prepare for the event of a pandemic before it actually happens," he said.

Iraqi soldiers inspect the wreckage of a suicide bomb near the home of a prominent Shiite political leader on Wednesday in Baghdad, Iraq.

Associated Press

International briefs

PARIS (AP) — Europe, backed by the United States, on Wednesday rejected Iraq's request for talks on its nuclear program, ceding to international pressure on Tehran to suspend uranium enrichment.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said "there's not much to talk about" until Iran halts nuclear activity. But Iraq's president accused the West of acting like the "lord of the world" in denying his country the peaceful use of the atom.

The quick dismissal of Iran's request for a ministerial-level meeting with French, British and German negotiators focused attention on the next step: the U.S. and European push to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council as soon as its "grave" nuclear activities. Iran has refused to halt its uranium enrichment and said it would continue with its "peaceful" nuclear program.

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. security forces killed five al-Qaida militants near the Afghan border — three suicide bombers and two of their handlers — in the latest in a series of raids on Qaeda training camps, forces have seized two Kenyan engineers, a master bomb maker and chemical weapons expert for al-Qaida was killed in an attack on the village of Damiul last week.

He was identified as Midhat Mardini, also known as Abu Khabab al-Masri, who ran an al-Qaida training camp and has a $3.5 million reward on his head.

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“Surge in bloodshed across Iraq kills scores of Iraqis and two American civilians”

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Paraphrasing:

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In the main area near Dujail, police and eyewitnesses said.

More than a dozen other Iraqis died Wednesday in attacks linked to the insurgency.

The increased violence came as efforts are continuing to find the leader of a prominent insurgent group that controls Iraqis, said the attackers seized the two Kenyans.

The two American civilians were killed in a roadside bombing in the southern city of Bai. They worked for the Iraq-based security company Dycorp and were training Iraqi police. A third American was seriously wounded in the attack, the U.S. Embassy said.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene said two four-wheel-drive vehicles were targeted. The area was surrounded by heavily armed British forces, whose main base is in Bai.

The killings occurred as a joint American-Iraqi investigation was under way to find Carroll, the 28-year-old American journalist who was abducted Jan. 7 in Baghdad. The freelance reporter for The Christian Science Monitor was seen in a video aired Tuesday by Al-Jazeera television.

Al-Jazeera said the silent 20-second video included a threat to kill Carroll in 72 hours unless U.S. authorities release all women detainees in Iraq. U.S. officials said eight women were in security detention and none had been freed as of Wednesday night.

Nevertheless, Maj. Gen. Hussein Carrol in 72 hours unless U.S.

Donors pledge $1.9 billion to fight bird flu

Margie Mason

BEIJING — After a year of unprecedented appeals for money to cope with the Asian and human outbreaks, the world took a deep breath Wednesday, pledging $1.9 billion to battle the bird flu and prepare for a potential pandemic.

The United States alone came up with $334 billion that will largely be used to help poor countries in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam and Indonesia, where the H5N1 bird virus is endemic. The European Union pledged another $261 million, responding with a renewed sense of urgency after the disease killed four children in Turkey.

In the two-day donors conference wrapped up in Beijing, participants were again reminded of the risk China reported eight human deaths.

"Nobody's wishing for more tragedy or more crises, but if the world has a better ability to respond to those, I think that's a good thing," said Jim Adams, head of the World Bank's bird flu task force, who said the $1.9 billion to pledges over three years was a precise step for the international aid community, which often responds to major disasters after they happen.

The World Bank had estimated $1.3 billion of the $5 billion would need to be prepared for a potential global pandemic and to fight bird flu, which has killed or forced the deaths of an estimated 140 million birds, with many countries moving to cull poultry stocks across Asia in late 2003. The virus also jumped from poultry to humans last year, infecting at least 79 people in east Asia and Turkey.

Experts worry the virus could mutate into a form easily spread from person to person, possibly sparking a global pandemic that kills millions. So far, human cases have been traced to contact with sick birds.

David Nabatma, the U.N. coordinator on avian and human influenza, said the international outpouring of support at the conference attended by more than 100 countries showed a determination to try to avert disaster.

"It was quite extraordinary, that we've taken very seriously, to be among the leaders in the effort," she said. "It will be used in coordination with the other donors and with the technical agencies." Large chunks of the total $1.9 billion will go to poor countries where the H5N1 virus poses the greatest threat, including improving surveillance, rapid response and containment mechanisms should a pandemic. flu strain emerge within their borders.

Other money will be used for strengthening laboratories and poultry vaccination programs. The World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health are also providing help.

EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said the EU increased its commitment to $212 million, about $20 million more than it announced last week. In addition, he said the 25 member states pledged a combined $140 million.

"Never before has humankind had a window of opportunity to prepare for the event of a pandemic before it actually happens," he said.
Nelson says he'll vote for Alito, but others say they won't

Jesse J. Holland
ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON (AP) —
Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito has caused a rift among Senate Democrats, with one saying publicly he will vote for the conservative judge while others are lining up to oppose his confirmation.

Democratic Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, the Senate's top diplomat from Maryland and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts all announced Wednesday they would vote against Alito, President Bush's pick to replace retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

"He's just not right for Montana, he's just not right for America," Baucus said. "Addio Mukoshi, I have a lot of unanswered questions."

But Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska announced Tuesday he will support Alito "because of his impeccable judicial record for its people, the top U.N. envoy to Afghanistan said.

"A new blueprint to be unveiled today will bring peace to Afghanistan," he said.

Edith M. Lederer
ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS —
International leaders will hold a conference later this month to introduce a new blueprint for bringing peace to Afghanistan and providing a better life for its people, the top U.N. envoy to Afghanistan said.

The conference for Afghanistan will establish key benchmarks and timelines to meet the major challenges confronting the country over the next five years — security, good government, human rights, the rule of law and ending the drug trade.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke announced Monday that the conference will be held Jan. 31-Feb. 1 in London to be followed by another meeting in Islamabad in March.

"We will build a framework for the international community to move forward in a way that can be sustained for the long term," Holbrooke said.

He said the conference will be followed by a U.N. security council session on Afghanistan on Wednesday in New York.

At the conference in London, the international community will commit to funding a new security strategy for Afghanistan, including major military deployments and economic assistance.

Resolving the conflict in Afghanistan "will require time, patience and a plan," Holbrooke said.

The conference will address security issues in the country.

The international community will support a new constitution and hold national elections.

The plan will be unveiled at a Jan. 31-Feb. 1 conference in London to be followed by another meeting in Islamabad in March.

The gathering will be a follow-up to the December 2001 conference in Bonn, Germany that established a political process for Afghanistan after the U.S. and allied forces ousted the Taliban in 2001. The U.S. and allied forces ousted the Taliban in 2001. The alliance was formed after the Taliban dissolved the government of Afghanistan after a quarter century of war that claimed more than a million lives.

In September, the country adopted a new constitution and held national elections.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said the compact will make it easier to address security issues in the country.

"The United States will be making a major pledge in support of Afghan development at that point. I think other governments will make substantial pledges, as well," he said.

Arnault said the recent surge in attacks in southern Afghanistan serves as a reminder of the magnitude of the tasks that remain to bring peace to the country.

On Monday, a suicide bomber killed 21 civilians in a wrestling match in an Afghan border town — the deadliest suicide attack since U.S.-led forces ousted the Taliban in 2001. The alliance was formed after the Taliban dissolved the government of Afghanistan after a quarter century of war that claimed more than a million lives.

In September, the country adopted a new constitution and held national elections.

An Atlas V rocket that will carry the New Horizons spacecraft on a mission to the planet Pluto sits on the launch pad after the liftoff was scrubbed at the Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday.

Launch of Pluto-bound probe delayed for second day

Mike Schneider
ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. —
For the second day in a row, Wednesday, NASA scrubbed the launch of an unmanned spacecraft on a nine-year voyage to Pluto — this time, because a storm in Maryland knocked out the power to a laboratory that will operate the probe.

High winds at the launch pad kept the spacecraft from lifting off Tuesday, the first day the launch window opened.

Scientists have been working 17 years on the mission, and they were unshowered by the back-to-back postponements.

"Two or three days doesn't mean a hill of beans," said Alan Stern, principal investigator for the mission.

A storm in Laurel, Md., knocked out power early Wednesday at the John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.

"The air conditioning was off. The flight controllers were sitting there waving fans," Stern said. "If they were dealing with any spacecraft issues, which first day out of the box a lot of spacecraft have, you can't concentrate like that."

The space agency has until mid-February to send the spacecraft on its way, but a launch in January would allow the spacecraft to use Jupiter's gravity to shave five years off the 3.9-billion-mile trip, allowing it to arrive as early as July 2015.

The spacecraft is about the size and shape of a concert piano. It will study Pluto as well as the frozen, unseen reaches of the solar system known as the Kuiper Belt.

Scientists believe that studying the region's icy, rocky objects can shed light on how the planets formed.
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For sports fans the unattainable is always the goal, the pilot light or open United Airlines landing on the moon something not attainable, but when grasped would have been glorious for everyone (except the astronaut who yielded that first foot). Who is going to win the Super Bowl? I don’t know, but whatever I do know is that I will be waiting until next year to see if something magical will happen, and hoping that I will get to see it.

Chris Gunn is a journalism senior and assistant sports editor. You can e-mail him at chgunn@dailypr.com.

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The class will be back next quarter. Sleeper said, because small companies in the U.S. and overseas supply the necessary fillings. Although the problem is apparent now, it may be somewhat hyped and could be corrected in a few months, Sleeper said.

“There are blanks out there, epoxy and polyester, people are starting to make them fast,” Sleeper said.

Blanks are coming, but surfboard prices are up and they are going to stay up “just because they can,” Sleeper said of surf retailers.

“There is more of a positive feel in the market that boards are coming,” Cowan said. He also said that manufacturers may be back to 100 percent as soon as April, but it is still up in the air.

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throwing early against a defense stacked to stop the ground game. They jumped to a 21-3 lead and won a game that wouldn’t have been close at the end if not for an egregious officiating error.

Beyond that, these are teams that at the beginning of the season were expected to be there — but seeded high.

Pittsburgh probably would have won the AFC North had Ben Roethlisberger not been hanged-up during a three-game losing streak that put their playoff chances in peril. The Patriots would have won the NFC South if not for a flaky running-into-the-kicker penalty that cost them a game against Dallas.

Also remember that both are better on the road than at home (8-2 to 5-3).

“We didn’t want to go through this by choice,” Pittsburgh’s Hines Ward said Wednesday. “That is how it went. Last year, we were a No. 1 seed. This year, we had to win our final four games just to get here. So we’ve been on a playoff mentality the last few weeks of the regular season. It’s win or go home, so we’ve gotten used to playing with pressure.”

Denver coach Mike Shanahan says of the Steelers’ road success: “They’ve been that way for about the last five years. There’s a good reason why they went into Indy and beat Indy and really had a chance to dominate the game. A couple calls here and there, and they dominate that football game.”

Some people who have watched the Steelers closely through Cowher’s 14 seasons also think they are playing better because less is expected from them. All five of the previous title games under Cowher were at home, and they are 1-4 in those, including a 41-27 loss to New England last year.

Fox, meanwhile, is establishing himself as a premier playoff coach and Jake Delhomme has become a proficient quarter-back. He quarterbacked Carolina to a win in Philadelphia in the conference title game two years ago, and he excelled in the game he lost the 32-29 shootout with New England in the Super Bowl.

“Yes, he was undrafted coming out of college, but he’s totally out-played two inexperienced first-round picks Eli Manning and Rex Grossman. “Once you do something, it makes it a little easier to do again,” Carolina defensive end Julius Peppers said. “Experience plays a part on it. I’m confident in our ability to go on the road and do well because we’ve done it before.”

So forget about those ’85 Patriots, mismatched in the big game against one of the better teams of the modern era. These low seeds are legitimate.
Wild card Super Bowl in the mix

Dave Goldberg
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Only the 1985 New England Patriots have won three games on the road to get to the Super Bowl. Don't put Pittsburgh and Carolina — both trying to accomplish the same feat — in a class with that bunch, which lost 46-10 to Chicago and became a footnote to history. They are legitimate contenders who ended up at the bottom of the standings because of injuries and flaky play, not because they lack ability.

Remember that the Steelers, the No. 6 seed in the AFC, are in their sixth conference title game in 12 years. The Panthers, No. 5 in the NFC, were in the Super Bowl two years ago and finished 11-5 this season, as good a record as anyone in the NFC but the Seahawks.

In fact, a Super Bowl between two wild-card teams wouldn't be a huge surprise — it would hardly be a shock if the Steelers win Sunday in Denver and the Panthers win in Seattle.

A lot of it has to do with the coaches.

John Fox of the Panthers was the Giants' defensive coordinator when they got to the Super Bowl in 2001 and is 5-1 in the postseason with Carolina. His offensive coordinator is Dan Henning, a head coach with Atlanta (1983-86) and San Diego (1989-91), but also a former assistant under Joe Gibbs with Super Bowl winners in Washington.

What they've done in two games might even be called astounding: shutting out a top offense and moving at ease through a top defense.

Even New York's Tiki Barber, who normally is careful with his comments, noted (correctly) how badly Carolina outcoached the Giants in the Meadowlands, blanking an offense that had scored 421 points in the regular season, third most in the league.

Then the Panthers went to Chicago, scored 29 points and put up 434 yards on what all season had been the NFL's best defense. That was against Coach of the Year Lovie Smith, as Henning and Juke Delhomme exploited defensive weaknesses that no one else seemed able to find.

Pittsburgh?

Cowher takes a lot of heat for four title-game losses at home. But maybe his critics should note that it takes a good coach to get that far six times in 12 seasons.

The defensive schemes cooked up by Cowher and coordinator Dick LeBeau, another former head coach, had Peyton Manning rattled and out of sync for three quarters of last week's game. He couldn't decipher the blitzes and was throwing off his back foot much of the time — just like his brother Eli did with the Giants against Carolina.

Also give the Steelers credit for offensive innovation. A team committed to the run more than any team in the league, they came out

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