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Thursday, January 8, 2008

They pave Mitchell Park, put in a parking lot

Cassandra Keyse

In a 3-2 vote on Tuesday night, the San Luis Obispo City Council approved the proposed construction of a 12-space parking lot behind the San Luis Obispo Senior Center at Mitchell Park.

The approved plan is slightly different from the original Mitchell Park Master Plan that called for a 14-space lot. The decrease in the number of spaces lowered the expected cost of the project from nearly $195,000 to $150,000.

The issue has stirred controversy in the community, pitting those in favor of preserving the downtown park against those in need of easier access to the senior center. The decision to lower the number of spaces to 12 was made by Mayor Romero in order to try to appease both sides of the argument.

Members of the senior center make up the majority of those in favor of the new parking lot. As street parking in front of the center is hard to come by, the parking lot would provide easier access to and from the center for those who require the use of walkers, canes or wheelchairs for mobility.

“I’m just overwhelmed,” said Marie Wilson, chair of the office volunteers at the Senior Center. “I couldn’t believe it almost. I was very surprised when some one told me it had past. It was a gift from God.”

According to Wilson, many members of the senior center are older; some are in their 80s and 90s. For these people, finding close enough parking on popular nights such as bingo night is crucial because their mobility is so limited.

Dave Kuykendall of the San Luis Obispo City Council expressed the group’s disappointment in the decision to pave at Mitchell Park.

“Going into this, we knew there was little chance of us delaying the decision,” said Kuykendall of the group’s expectations. “Although we did have an excellent design and alternative plan, it seems that the city council had already made up their minds before hand. We’re very disappointed.”

The three council members who voted to approve the measure were Mayor Dave Romero, and Councilmen Andrew Carter and John Ashbaugh. Councilman Allan Sekel and Councilwoman Cassandra Keyse voted against.

Members of the senior center were very happy with the outcome. “I couldn’t believe it almost. I was very surprised when someone told me it had past. It was a gift from God.”

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President-elect Barack Obama met with every living U.S. President on Wednesday to discuss world issues.


Schwarzenegger to restart stalled budget talks

Steve Lawrence

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said Wednesday that he’ll restart stalled budget talks with legislative leaders in hopes of getting a quick deficit-cutting agreement that would save the state from having to issue IOUs to vendors and taxpayers expecting refunds.

“Everyone makes New Year’s resolutions,” Schwarzenegger told reporters during a news conference. “So here’s a chance to say, ‘Let’s start a new year here. We have a huge budget deficit. We have three weeks before we go off the cliff and before we have to hand out those IOUs. Let’s do it.’”

The Republican governor said he would meet Thursday with the two top Democrats and two leading Republicans to try to reach an agreement before the state is forced to start issuing promissory notes and laying off some state workers.

Feb. 23 — He called the news conference a day after vetoing an $18 billion deficit-cutting package passed by Democrats. Schwarzenegger said the Democratic plan was short on spending cuts and failed to roll back environmental reviews to speed up job-creating public works projects.

The governor and Democrats want a combination of spending cuts and tax increases to deal with a deficit that is projected to reach $42 billion over the next 18 months, but Republicans have balked at any tax hikes.

Democrats need at least three Republican votes in each house to put together the two-thirds majorities required to pass tax increases. Democrats attempted to get around that requirement in their $18 billion package by running some taxes, cutting others and imposing a new fee on gasoline sales.

Republican lawmakers and taxpayer groups filed a lawsuit this week against

Obama hails ‘extraordinary’ moment with presidents

Ben Feller

WASHINGTON (AP) — Confronting a grim economy and a Middle East on fire, Barack Obama turned Wednesday to perhaps the only people on the planet who understand what he’s in for: the four living members of the U.S. presidents’ club.

In an image bound to go down in history, every living U.S. president came together at the White House on Wednesday to hash over the world’s challenges with the president-elect. There they stood, shoulder-to-shoulder in the Oval Office: George H.W. Bush, Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter.

“This is an extraordinary gathering,” Obama said, looking plenty at ease in the humming office that will soon be his.

“All the gentlemen here understand both the pressures and possibilities of this office,” Obama said. “And for me to have the opportunity to get advice, good counsel and fellowship with these individuals is extraordinary. And I’m very grateful to all of them.”

Bush, blistered without mercy by Obama during the campaign season, played the role of gracious host.

“All of us who have served in this office understand that the office transcends the individual,” Bush said as Obama nodded in thanks. “And we wish you all the very best. And do good work.”

It was a moment of statesmanship that tends to happen when presidents get together, no matter how bitter their previous rivalries. In a photo opportunity that lasted less than two minutes, Carter, Clinton and the senior Bush smiled but said nothing. They deferred to the

see President-elect Barack Obama met with every living U.S. President on Wednesday to discuss world issues.

US: Troops kill 32 insurgents in battle in east Afghanistan

The U.S. statement also said one of the militants killed was a woman. The incident happened in Asajab district, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northeast of the capital of Kabul.

In western Farah province on Wednesday, Afghan army and coalition forces killed 32 militants in a two-hour shoot out, the U.S. military said in a separate statement. Around 20 militants were killed in the two-hour shoot out, in which the militants killed were women, children and civilians, had been recovered.

President Carter and Clinton both had some unique insights because they had younger children when they were in the White House," he said. "We just want to make sure that we are creating nor- macy as much as possible in what obviously is an extraordinary situ- nation."

Earlier in the day, Bush and Obama met privately in the Oval Office in a chat expected to cover events of the day, mainly the troubled economy and Middle East. The two have shown solidarity since Obama's win in November, with one previous Oval Office sit-down and at least a few phone calls in re- cent weeks.

"One message that I have, and I think we all share, is that we want you to succeed," Bush added, beaming Clinton at his other side. "We believe we are all part of the country." White House aides tried to usher the media out of the Oval Office when Bush stopped speaking. The lighting for the event even went dark.

The get-together was Obama's idea, and he likely had the lunch lasting about 90 minutes, held in a small dining room off the Oval Of- fice.

Carter, Clinton and the two presidents were last together at the Washington funeral service of President Gerald Ford in 2007. And they met at least at other occasions over the years, but not since October 1991 — 27 years ago when the two presidents gathered at the White House.

PRESIDENTS
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But no one expects the U.S. to use its military might to try to force the militants to accept a peace deal. Instead, it wants the militants to negotiate, as they have in the past, as a way to end the war.

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the Democratic plan, contending it violated the two-thirds vote require- ment. Schwaizererger recently released his own budget fix to cover the next 1½ years. He proposed $14.3 billion in tax increases and other new rev- enue, $7.4 billion in spending cuts and $10 billion in borrowing.

Also of concern is the possible increase in traffic around the park on Santa Rosa and Buchon Streets. Both the entrance and exit of the parking lot are going to be placed line the sidewalk and the route 4 bus takes regularly.

Do not forget to come to the Industry Social @ Madonna Inn on January 12th.
State

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Peace actions and religious organizations are holding a silent candlelight vigil at the Islamic Center in Los Angeles to call for a cease-fire in the Middle East.

The peace action Wednesday is the latest demonstration in the city over the conflict between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in Gaza. The vigil has attracted more than 50 members of the Quaker American Friends Service Committee, the Los Angeles Jews for Peace and the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California.

Earlier Wednesday, dozens of demonstrators gathered at the Federal Building in Westwood to support the return of an unarmed man at Oakland's Fruitvale Station resigned from the transit agency investigators can Wednesday, according to BART officials.

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — The Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer who fatally shot an unarmed man at Oakland's Fruitvale Station resigned from the transit agency Wednesday.

Representatives for 27-year-old Johannes Mehserle submitted the resignation letter on his behalf, according to BART officials.

Twenty-two-year-old Chancellor Grant of Hayward was lying face-down on the station platform when he was shot and killed early New Year's Day. Mehserle was one of several officers responding to reports about a group of men fighting on a train.

BART officials said Mehserle was scheduled to meet with agency investigators on Wednesday, but did not show up. His attorney and union representative turned in the resignation letter.

NEW YORK (AP) — Watch out, Las Vegas. New York City wants to become the new No. 1 place to tie the knot.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has given City Hall's famously grizzly marriage bureau a gleaming makeover, with fewer lines, more space to take photographs, video screens to monitor wait times and wedding chapels with gauzy curtains and walls painted in muted tones.

And in case the new look needs to be forget any essentials, the space features a small shop that sells fresh flowers, disposable cameras, tissues, hors d'oeuvre and sparkly fake diamond rings for $9 each.

GALVESTON, Texas (AP) — Galveston officials pleaded with state lawmakers Wednesday for help in rescuing their island city from the dire financial straits it finds itself in nearly four months after the devastation of Hurricane Ike.

"We're getting to the point of being desperate for help," City Manager Steve Lewis told members of the House Select Committee on Hurricane Ike during a meeting on the island.

DECAYERT, Ala. (AP) — A federal judge ordered an Alabama sheriff locked up in his own jail Wednesday after holding him in contempt for failing to adequately feed inmates while profiting from the skilled labor.

U.S. District Judge U.W. Clinton had court security arrest Morgan County Sheriff Greg Barnett after dramatic testimony from skinny prisoners about paper-thin bologna and cold grits. The hearing offered a rare look into Alabama's unusual practice of letting sheriffs pocket the money left over from feeding inmates.

International

NEW DELHI (AP) — "Keep your phone switched on," a handmade instruction tape for gunmen by phone is being distributed to young militants by Pakistani-based militants directing the attacks by mobile phone.

The men on the phone were confident, direct — and brutal.

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S.-led forces killed a Taliban bomb-making cell in eastern Afghanistan, killing 32 insurgents in a battle with scores of armed militants who shot at them from rooftops and alleyways, the military said Wednesday.

The firefight broke out Tuesday in Laghman province when as many as 15 armed militants converged on the men, who were searching a number of compounds in the area, the military said in a statement. The 32 insurgents were killed when coalition troops returned fire.

BAGHDAD (AP) — The top American commander in the former insurgent stronghold of Anbar said Wednesday the Shiite-led government should have poured reconstruction money into the Sunni region after Sunni fighters joined forces with U.S. troops to chase al-Qaida out of the western province.

Marine Maj. Gen. John F. Kelly told The Associated Press that ignorance "mission failure" was his inability to bring together the government in Baghdad and the Sunni in Anbar to take advantage of the steep decline in violence.

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Iraqi cleric urges attacks on U.S. troops over Gaza

Irqi demonstrators burn a U.S. flag as men hold a poster showing radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr during a protest against the Israeli attack on Gaza in Sadr City, Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 31, 2008.

Saeem N. Yacoub
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr on Wednesday urged Islam's 1.1 billion members to support American forces in Iraq to protest Israeli's Gaza offensive, as Arab angry groves over civilian deaths in the Palestinian territory.

The strongly worded statement signaled a threat by a Sadr's militia fighters to renew violence against American troops after months of relative calm.

It was unclear, however, how much influence the once-powerful Shiite leader — who is believed to be in Iran — still has. His fighters have been hit hard in U.S.-Iraqi military operations over the past year.

The U.S. State Department dismissed al-Sadr's calls, describing them as "outrageous."

"Any call for attacks against Americans is outrageous and, frankly, not worthy of much more comment," deputy state Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters. "Outside calls to attack Americans for what's going on in the region are outrageous."

The Bush administration held off Wednesday from backing an Egyptian plan for emergency talks in Cairo to end fighting in Gaza, saying it was exploring other options to secure a lasting agreement that would end the violence. Israelis have expressed outrage over what the Israelis offensive and what is perceived as U.S. inaction, holding protests to show solidarity with the Palestinians. The issue has again put the spotlight on Iraq's relations with Israel and the two countries remain technically at war.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki expressed regret over the Israeli offensive and accused the international community of ignoring the plight of the Palestinians.

"It is regrettable that this brutal crime continues with the silence of the international community," he said.

He called on other Arab and Muslim nations to "abolish diplomatic relations" with Israel and to "stop all public and clandestine contacts with this murderous regime."

Only two Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan, have peace treaties with Israel.

In his own statement, al-Sadr said more action was needed "due to the continuation of Arab silence and the massacres committed by the Zionist enemy under U.S. and international covers.

"I call upon the honest Iraqi resistance to carry out revenge operations against the great accomplice of the Zionist enemy under U.S. and international covers."

"Stop all public and clandestine contacts with this murderous regime."

Iraqi demonstrators burn a U.S. flag as men hold a poster showing radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr during a protest against the Israeli attack on Gaza in Sadr City, Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 31, 2008.

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As he's done for the last decade, Apple Inc. Chief Executive Steve Jobs took home his customary $1 annual salary, but the economic meltdown and Apple's falling stock price whacked half a billion dollars off his personal holdings in the company.

Apple said in a regulatory filing Wednesday that Jobs, 53, who holds 5.5 million shares of Apple's stock, hasn't sold any of the shares since rejoining the company in 1997. That means what he lacks in annual compensation is made up for in the enormous amount of stock he already holds — a hold

Apple's Steve Jobs takes $1 salary, but holdings suffer

Jordan Robertson
ASSOCIATED PRESS

that took a beating in 2008 amid fears about the Mac maker's vulnerability to the U.S. recession.

Apple shares have lost more than half their value since the end of 2007, when they were trading near $200 and Jobs' holdings were worth more than $1 billion. The stock finished Wednesday's trading session down $2.01, 2 percent, at $91.01, meaning Jobs' stake is worth around $500 million.

A big hit by any measure, the decline still barely dents Jobs' mas- terpiece fortune, estimated by Forbes magazine earlier this year at $5.7 billion and ranking him 61st on the magazine's list of the richest Americans.

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MUSTANG DAILY

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson listens to questions from the press regarding his withdrawal as the nominee for secretary of the Commerce Department. Richardson was attending, along with Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez Wednesday.

Richardson adviser worked for firm under federal probe

Barry Massey
ASSOCIATED PRESS

One of Gov. Bill Richardson's closest friends and advisers worked as a consultant for the California firm at the center of a federal pay-to-play probe that detailed the governor's appointment as commerce secretary.

Mike Stratton, Richardson's consulting firm worked for CDR Financial Products to advise on business in New Mexico at the time the company was hired to work on bond deals with the New Mexico Finance Authority.

Federal investigators are now scrutinizing whether CDR's work, for which it earned nearly $1.5 million in fees, was influenced by political contributions that CDR and its chief executive David Ripp made to Richardson's political committee.

Stratton, a longtime Democratic political consultant, has been friends with Richardson for more than 25 years. He advised Richardson and raised money for him during the governor's failed bid for the 2008 presidential nomination.

Stratton did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The $75,000 contribution was made June 18, 2004, just days before CDR was awarded a no-competition state contract to reinvest bond proceeds.

The Finance Authority's chief financial officer recommended CDR for the work in a memorandum dated June 25, 2004, and the authority's board approved the selection June 30.

Bill Sinners, executive director of the Finance Authority, said he received numerous telephone calls from Stratton's firm in June 2004.

Joan Coplan, a senior consultant for Stratton and Associates, had telephoned him repeatedly about the opportunity for reinvestment of the bond proceeds held in escrow and the authority's possible use of CDR. Stratton's firm was "kind of pitching the idea," Sinners said.

The escrow restructuring was approved by the authority's board as a "sole source procurement" of services with CDR — with no competitive bid process before the firm's selection, Sinners said the agency needed to act fast before the reinvestment was precluded by a change in federal regulations.

Sinners said it was a "market-driven transaction" — not influenced by Stratton's firm or the governor's office.

No one in the governor's office contacted him about the possible transaction with CDR, Sinners said.

"Nobody ever instructed me to use them," he said.

Sinners said federal investigators have questioned him about his contact with Richardson's former chief of staff, David Contarino, on the selection:

"I went to him for policy advice," Sinners said he had discussed the escrow reinvestment plan with Contarino but was not instructed to hire CDR.

"Even to this day I've never had a conversation with Gov. Richardson about CDR," Sinners said.

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For a guy who would rather enroll in upper-division calculus than sit through a live musical, and who looks back with less-than-fond memories about his childhood in Catholic school, the idea of attending a theater production about Jesus was less than appealing.

While I admit I have never seen the famous 1973 Norweigian film version, nor the current rein­
version which has toured off-Broadway for nearly two decades, I have to say that “Jesus Chris Super­
star,” which made its one-night stop at the Cohen Center on Tuesday, was not as bad as my preconcep­
tion would lead me to believe.

The extravagant rock opera, a collaboration be­
tween composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice, tells the story of the last days of Christ, from his arrival to Jerusalem to his crucifixion.

Playing the prototypical role of Jesus was Ted Neeley, an understudy during the show’s original run in 1971 whose lead in the film version helped turn “Super­
star” into a global phenomenon earned him a Golden Globe nomination.

Though his stage presence was less commanding than some of his younger co-stars, Neeley lived up to his legend during his solo numbers, including “Geth­
semane” and “Poor Jerusalem,” where his dynamic vocal range reminded this audience member of the broodiness of Blood, Sweat & Tears and the power of Styx.

Other cast members steal the show, however, like the velvet-voiced Cristina Sass as the prostitute Mary Magdeline and multi-talented emoticon James Del­
ino in the doomed Judas.

There were other good performances by the bar­
rel-chested Jason Kerr as the villainous high priest Caiphas and Mark Baratelli, whose flamboyant King Herod provided the otherwise melodramatic pro­duction with some much-needed and well-delivered comic relief.

While the performances and choreography were definitely notable, the real attention-grabber for those who hate singing and dancing like me, was the band that played the soundtrack offstage. The band was so tight and the sound quality mixed to such perfection that playing the lead guitar could teach this 12-year veteran more than a thing or two.

In true rock opera fashion, the lighting and special effects were dazzling, with fog spewing and intricate psychedelic designs shal­loming the audience and the massive walls of the Christopher Cohen Center. Jesus’ free-floating ascent off the cross into Heaven was especially spectacular.

While I may never truly understand the draw to musicals, it is easy for me to grasp how anyone, with or without a Judeo-Christian background, would be moved by the words and music of this particular production. Toward the climax of the show, as Jesus slowly died on the cross, I couldn’t help but notice the sweet old woman sitting next to me choking back her tears.

If this reporter lacked any enthusiasm for this pro­duction, there was definitely no shortage among the audience members I talked to, many coming from all over the Central Coast to see Neeley reprise his most famous role.

“I loved it,” said Janice White who came from Templeton to see the production. “Ted Neeley made the show.”

That seemed to be the consensus. Ellen Jensen of Arroyo Grande said, “I thought it was great. Neeley is amazing. I saw him do the show back in ’71. . .and he’s better now than he was back then.”

Gail Stevens of Cambria agreed. “I’d never been to a true musical before, where there’s no speaking in between. It was wonderful, holy entertaining and the performers were top notch.”

When asked who her favorite performer was, Ste­
vens responded without pause, “Ted Neeley: good­
looking guy, great voice and I remember him from the movie. He was almost as good live as he was in that movie. Not bad for a 65-year-old guy.”

If for nothing else, witnessing this show at this particular moment in history inspires thought and consideration of how far—and how little—things have changed since Biblical times. In a week where Israel is in the middle of a massive, one-sided ground and air attack on Gaza, I was forced to reflect on how their role certainly has changed since they were the underdog to the Romans.

The story holds timely political relevance, as well. As Jesus’ disciples shouted out, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” seeking his salvation, I was reminded of those today— not only in this country, but in many parts of the world—who are desperately looking to the incom­
ning American president to solve all their problems.

And just like Jesus’ disciples, many are truly worried about the safety of our new leader.

‘Doubt’ gives startlingly accurate account of Catholic guilt

Blake Goble
MICHIGAN DAILY (U. MICHIGAN)

There’s something fascinating about the an­tiquity and rituals of churches. They are stuffy, confusing and kind of empty; they produce the same over-arching sensations felt when watch­ing “Doubt”.

There are two reasons to see “Doubt.” First, there’s never been such an accurate depiction of Catholic school in popular film. Second, “Doubt” arrives at dueling cultural corner­stones, setting itself right after the assassina­tion of John F. Kennedy and the moon landing, at a time of Catholic bewilderment.

A minimalist prodding of ideals realized with great performances. "Doubt" is a sensationally provocative film. Based on the award-winning play by John Patrick Shanley (“Moonstruck”), "Doubt" is a series of circumstances, incidents and revelations at a Bronx Catholic School in the fall of 1964. At its core, it’s about adults in conflict over something that may or may not have happened to Donald Miller (newcomer Joseph Exner), a young African-American stu­dent.

Father Flynn (Philip Seymour Hoffman, "Charlie Wilson’s War”) is a new priest at the school with a liberal approach to sermonizing kindness and understanding. Still, he adheres to old-school assumption of priority over rules and has a penchant forcerly long nails.

Meanwhile, Sister Aloysius (Meryl Streep, “Mamma Mia!”) is the school’s principal and resident old-guard nun. Stern, strict and infi­nitely terrifying to the parish, she’s not quite a ruler-sweiner, but her powers of guilt and ac­cusation more than compensate for her aversion to physical punishment.

When suspicions arise that Donald was mo­
tested by Flynn, questions and accusations are tossed about by all. But, much like faith itself, “Doubt” isn’t about finding answers. It’s infe­
doesn’t mumble words.

Everyone knows about Catholic guilt, but “Doubt” presents a lesser known trait: Catholic intrusiveness. A mix of broad humor and deadly serious drama, “Doubt” gets its ideas out any way it can. Starting off as a historical pastiche of manifests Catholicism, writer-director Shanley understands the humor of private schools and their rules.

According to Aloysius, ballpoint pens are ra­
ning penmanship in this country and a photo of the Pope at the front of class is resonant, as

Ted Neeley performed as Jesus Christ in the original 1973 film version of “Jesus Christ Superstar,” a role he still performs today.
Doubt

continued from page 5

well as a good mock-mirror through which to watch the students. The manners, relating to meddling and formality, are fascinating because they’re so true. For outsiders it’s funny and unusual, but for Catholic school refugees, it’s almost too honest.

But it’s the intrusions that lead to a series of religious quandaries and tested fissions over what exactly happened to the boy. Did Flynn do something? Or is Aloysius over-reacting? The drama, which shouldn’t be elaborated upon too heavily, is breathtaking. As an audience member, you can never take sides or make assumptions because you’ve never known what to make of anyone in “Doubt.”

It’s the kind of film that the Academy drools over. In immaculate performances, Hoffman, Streep and Adams each put themselves at differing points of their faiths, but the real runaway winner will be Viola Davis (“Disturbia”) as Mrs. Miller, Donald’s mother. Her beautiful obituary about her son is worth the price of admission alone. It transcends the simplicities of religion to show how faith never gives perfect answers.

With a film that has such brave ideas, presented outright and with historical thoroughness, the only leotrons may just be the direction. Shusley, an Oscar-winning writer, directed here and pangs of first-time decisions are apparent throughout. Tilted angles, a bit too much screaming and an all too debatable conclusion make “Doubt” imperfect. Just like any religion.

“Doubt” starring Meryl Streep and Philip Seymour Hoffman premiered on December 12, 2008 to limited audiences.

Sex, seedy bars
and outer space

Over the winter break, my house reconciled our love affair with an exquisitely rad film known throughout the land as “The American Astronaut,” a space-western musical perpetrated by the band The Billy Nayer Show. Starred, written and directed by the Frontman Cory McAbee, the film chronicles the misadventures of Samuel Curtis, a 16-year-old boy to Venus so that he may be the stud for the planet made entirely of women. Since the film’s debut in 2001, Cory McAbee spent the majority of his time working on another film, a book and another album, which never seemed to come until now. He emerges again triumphantly, changing the band’s name from The Billy Nayer Show to The American Astronaut and releasing two new EPs “Goodbye California” and “Reno” as well as a new film, “Stingray Sam” that will debut this month at Sundance.

This brings me to my review of American Astronaut and releasing two new F.Ps “Goodbye California” and “Reno” tread a slightly more reek of the sappiness between hon-eymoons or the shirt that covers the broken hearted. That’s why I got into them in the first place. But now Cory McAbee seems to have left all those joys and dis-appointments behind him and now roams the world looking for his place in it. The two EPs seem to be the product of a middle-aged man leaving a dead end job without hav-ing anyplace to go other than a filthy bar to throw down in short order. It’s awesome.

In the title track “Good­bye Cali­for­nia,” Cory McAbee grunts an explanation for his self-imposed exile from the land back doub­t-bag­gery of our state. It’s simple really. The lyrics and the music are unimpressive and cranky. But as the EP progresses, things get better. In “Twist and Shout,” the band dances out their angstimes in a seedy bar to crunchy guitar riffs accompanied by a very clean and simple piano. The next track “Two­Flies” reminds me of watching your ex hook up with some guy at a filthy bar. The worst part is as they make out, she watches the expres­sion on your face because your ex always gets her off. But things get better because now he isn’t in California, he’s on Mars. Things are better. It’s a fresh start but “everything you ever knew is turned into something new to you.” It’s the same old bullshit with new people, kind of like the band.

In short, I’m all about this band and their films. They are worth a listen and a watch. Beginners should start out with their first feature film “American Astronaut” and allow themselves to get sucked in that way. If that doesn’t work out for you, then you are some sort of square with healthy living habits and I don’t want to know you.
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Appointment of Panetta is one giant leap in the wrong direction

Ian Nachreiner

What world are we living in, where a career political hack, Leon Panetta, can make his way to an Obama appointment as the Director of the CIA? I contend, we are in a nation that has forgotten. Forgotten how far we've come and the resolve it takes to defeat Islamic fascist extremists bent on the destruction of Western civilization.

I have argued that one of the many reasons Obama is now our President-elect is because it was a referendum against President Bush and the policies of the past eight years, policies that involved a global war on terrorism, detentions of enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay and increased intelligence capabilities. Most importantly, policies that allowed for interrogations of prisoners. Yet Bush opponents contend that terrorists need to be given civil rights and criminal trials.

As Brian Williams reported Tuesday on NBC Nightly News, Panetta’s appointment is “a big change in direction for U.S. intelligence policy.” Frankly this is not Obama's first mistake, and it won’t be his last. Panetta is by no means an expert when it comes to intelligence. He served as former President Clinton’s chief of staff and budget director at a news conference this week, Obama explained. “The intelligence community is no longer geared towards what they think the president wants to hear, but instead delivering what the president needs to hear... Panetta brings extraordinary management skills, great political savvy and impeccable integrity.”

First, what evidence is there to suggest that over the past 8 years the intelligence President Bush was receiving was both what he wanted to hear, and what he needed to hear? The two are not mutually exclusive. Second, how does having “great political savvy” help you in the CIA? It may help you get more funding on Capitol Hill, but when it comes to the day to day operations of running that agency, Panetta isn’t qualified to be a receptionist, let alone the Director. The problem is that he has been overly political in the past, and there is no evidence to suggest that he won’t in the future. The CIA, like most government agencies, should be apolitical as possible. I don’t want to lay awake at night wondering if our government isn’t keeping us safe because an interrogation is no longer politically expedient.

The pundits are suggesting that though Panetta activities, such as rendition, will be halted, Gitmo will be shut down, civil liberties will be restored and the Geneva Conventions will be applied. Having known terrorists in custody away from concentrations of civilians in one central location is a good thing. The terrorists are off the streets and we are safer.

Civil liberties shouldn’t matter when it comes to terrorists if they are not citizens. It is not to say we shouldn’t be respectful, but it doesn’t mean that all constitutional rights afforded to citizens are of no consequence.

The American people are OK with the war on terrorism, detention of enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay, increased intelligence capabilities and the use of enhanced interrogation techniques. Is that an enemy we can respect?

We don’t hear the reports of what our nightly news programs say about the torture of our troops, hang them from the sides of bridges, booby trapped to inflict additional causalities. Is that an enemy we can respect?

The dirty little secret is that lives are saved by not being paranoians on the battlefield. No-body wants to be in favor of torture, or brutal realities. But we work. I am not a Bush apologist by any stretch of the imagination. However, when it comes to the issue of national security, are we safer today than we were eight years ago? Yes, we are.

If we want to maintain that safety we will have to keep taking the fight to them. It may be ugly, and we may not like it, but it is a necessary evil. The American people are OK with such things as long as they are ignorant to the truth. If their safety is secured without knowing how we get it, we the people will accept it.

The bottom line: I protect Panetta’s appointment, and hope the Senate rejects his confirmation. It represents a disastrous change in direction for our national security. However, unlike my liberal counterparts, I will not hold my breath until this happens and I realize that no matter how much I kick, scream, yell or argue, I will not get my way. Panetta will more than likely be the next CIA director, wrong as it may be.

Ian Nachreiner is an agricultural science senior and a Mustang Daily columnist.

Write a letter

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from a newfound liberal persuasion in college-aged people, but because during the last election our generation strongly resonated with the politics of Barack Obama. There is no certain way to predict if people indicated that they were Democrat last November because of Barack Obama, if there was a genuine resonance with the ideas of the Democratic Party or if it was due to the simple fact that more Democrats came to the polls.

Dionne claims that there was a genuine resonance between the Democratic Party and the American people, and he credits the change of heart to what has been termed by others "The Bush Effect" and the rigid, stale dogmas of the Republican Party. I do not condone compromising ideological values for political purposes nor do I approve of political opportunism, but I do believe that the conservatives need to adapt to the moderate voice in America if they want to be effective in future American politics.

In times like these, when simply maintaining a job and paying the bills is an issue for many people, and as we watch the middle class slowly dissolve into poverty, the promise of fiscal responsibility and low taxes just doesn’t cut it.

In hard financial times like these, those two absolutes of the Republican Party’s ideology reveal how distant they are from the cares of the average American. It reminds me of the famous phrase, “Let them eat cake,” which was said to be uttered by Marie Antoinette during the famine in France. And sadly, the Republican Party’s focus doesn’t get any better from there. One of the four Republican contenders for chairman is Chip Saltsman, who is known for releasing a song called “Barack the Magic Negro,” which aired on the Rush Limbaugh radio talk show.

The announcement of Hamas not wanting to extend the cease-fire shows the moral intentions of each side. As rockets continue to fire into Israel, the nation is simply trying to defend itself by targeting Hamas militants, not civilians. While I am saddened by civilian deaths, most of the people killed in Gaza are Hamas militants who operate in mosques, schools, and other buildings, firing their rockets from those places. Israel doesn’t want civilian deaths. Hamas just wants to protect their cities and citizens. How long would Los Angeles wait if rockets were targeted there?

Hamas continues to fire rockets with motives to kill any civilian possible. They do not support the Israel’s existence and with do whatever it takes to kill Israelis, either by rockets or by suicide bombers. Unlike Israel, their moral intentions are dangerous. Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by the US, the EU, the UN, and by NATO. It does not want peace.

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. published an article titled “The Party of Tomorrow” Tuesday in which he discusses the state of politics in America, more specifically the future of the Republican and Democratic parties.

Both political parties are electing new chairmen and thus both stand to reinvent their party’s public discourse. For Democrats, this is the time to hold on to the open-minded, moderate aura that President-elect Obama has established. On the other hand, the widespread losses that Republicans suffered in the last election have placed their party in a peculiar and delicate situation.

Dionne asked the director of polling at The Washington Post to crunch media exit poll statistics from the last two elections by party and ideology, and he found that “In 2004, 18- to 29-year-olds tilted only narrowly Democratic, 37 percent to 35 percent. In 2008, 45 percent of the under-30s called themselves Democrat, only 26 percent called themselves Republican.” So, there is a striking trend of people our age leaning toward the Democratic Party. Some would say that this trend arises, not from a newfound liberal persuasion in college-aged people, but because during the last election our generation strongly resonated with the politics of Barack Obama. There is no certain way to predict if people indicated that they were Democrat last November because of Barack Obama, if there was a genuine resonance with the ideas of the Democratic Party or if it was due to the simple fact that more Democrats came to the polls.

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Resistence is futile: head for middle ground

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Focus on moral intentions of both sides in the Gaza conflict

Despite a cease-fire, Hamas fired almost 2,000 rockets into Israel in 2008. Israel responded by targeting Hamas in order to defend itself. Israel announced that it was in favor of extending the cease-fire, provided that Hamas adhered to its conditions. Israel’s conditions include ending all rocket fire and halting weapons smuggling. Hamas later announced that it would not agree to extend the cease-fire.

The announcement of Hamas not wanting to extend the cease-fire shows the moral intentions of each side. As rockets continue to fire into Israel, the nation is simply trying to defend itself by targeting Hamas militants, not civilians. While I am saddened by civilian deaths, most of the people killed in Gaza are Hamas militants who operate in mosques, schools, and other buildings, firing their rockets from those places. Israel doesn’t want civilian deaths. Hamas just wants to protect their cities and citizens. How long would Los Angeles wait if rockets were targeted there?

Hamas continues to fire rockets with motives to kill any civilian possible. They do not support the Israel’s existence and will do whatever it takes to kill Israelis, either by rockets or by suicide bombers. Unlike Israel, their moral intentions are dangerous. Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by the US, the EU, the UN, and by NATO. It does not want peace.

Barack Obama said, "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I would do everything to stop that, and would expect Israel to do the same thing."
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The Best in this Convention to get a...
Basketball
continued from page 12

spect him that much." Bromley said that stopping Ako-
grom is relative to the number of shots he is forced to put up in order 
to score his points.

"He gets (the shot) off so easily," Bromley said. "He's a quick shot 
guy. He has a great stroke and great 
shots he is forced to put up in order to get his points. I don't think can you hold him 
scorless.

The Mustangs will be playing a 
Fullerton team that has similar 
score on the frontline, a fact that 
Keeler said helps Cal Poly.

"They don't have too many 
bigs," Keeler said. "I think we 
take more shots to get his points.

Brandon Spikes called Big 12 de-

Famous here to lead a team to 
the top of the conference, you

"I'll hear something about Tim's 
throwing motion or the NFL is 
looking for — I sometimes get con-

usually, teams try to avoid giving 
their opponents something to 
tack up on the bulletin board. This time, 
Meyer seemed more than fine with 
the barbs. His team was a four-point 
favorite, and he wanted to avoid any 
chance of complacency.

"If I had my druthers, I'd rather 
coach a very mean, angry, nasty, up-
set team," he said. "I have to get to 
that point."
Josh Akognon has played against the world's best basketball players. He helped his relatively unknown Nigerian national team beat defending world champions Serbia-Montenegro in 2006.

The 6-foot-11 guard, who is eighth in the nation in scoring, led Cal State Fullerton (6-8, 0-2 Big West Conference) into Mont Gym at 8 p.m. tonight to face Cal Poly (3-9, 0-2) in an important early-conference game.

If that isn't enough to motivate the Mustangs, the game will also be nationally televised on ESPNU.

"I love anytime we get any TV exposure," said Cal Poly head coach Kevin Bromley. "It gives you a chance to showcase your own kids in your arena."

Both teams are trying to avoid potentially falling three games behind conference leaders UC Riverside and Long Beach State.

"It's going to be a big game because we're 0-2 in conference," said Cal Poly junior guard Lorenzo Keeler. "By Sunday our goals are to be 2-2 in conference by knocking off Fullerton and Irvine and to play with intensity."

Keeler will be one of the Mustangs given the unenviable task of guarding Akognon who is averaging 23.5 points per game.

"Josh is a handful," Keeler said. "He's instant offense. He's already gone twice for 40-plus points. Usually if he plays well, it's easier for them to win."

Akognon, who transferred to Cal State Fullerton following his freshman year at Pac-10's Washington State, is currently sixth in the nation in 3-point field goal made per game at 3.9.

"We've got to make it tough for him," Keeler said. "We have to make sure to have a hand up in his face every single time."

Junior guard Charles Anderson will also see time defending Akognon. He agreed that limiting the quality of Akognon's, coaches is an important part of the Mustangs' gameplan.

"He's the best shooter we'll play by far," Anderson said. "But we're going to try to do some things to limit his shots. Akognon's shooting ability is reminiscent of the nation's leading scorer, Davidson junior guard Stephen Curry. Curry, also a relatively small guard, is averaging 29.2 points despite a game in which he was double-teamed for the entire 32 minutes he played, without and with the ball. Curry was called scoreless in the game. His Wildcats still won by 30 points.

Anderson said not to count on a similar strategy against Akognon. "We respect him," Anderson said, laughing. "But we don't re-

Clark ruled academically ineligible

Cal Poly senior guard Trae Clark was ruled academically ineligible for the winter quarter and will miss the remainder of the men's basketball season.

"This is disappointment for all of us, including Trae," Cal Poly head coach Kevin Bromley said in a statement. "He has fallen short on his academic responsibilities and that has cost him the remainder of his senior season of basketball."

The ruling effectively ends his Cal Poly basketball career.

Clark, a business administration major, was named a co-captain at the beginning of the season after leading the Mustangs in scoring and assists last year.

As a junior, Clark averaged 10.3 points and 2.2 assists per game, starting 20 of Cal Poly's 30 games.

Clark last played in the Mustangs' 66-64 loss to Cal State Bakersfield on Dec. 23 where he collected eight points, two assists and a rebound.

He was averaging 6.8 points and 2.7 assists per game this year.

Clark played in '95 games during his four-year career at Cal Poly, starting in 70 of them.

Senior guard Chaz Thomas has assumed the starting role in Clark's place, while sharing playing time with freshman guard Justin Brown.

Florida head coach Urban Meyer poses in front of the BCS championship trophy during a press conference in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. on Wednesday.

Hold that pose:
Florida, Oklahoma play for No. 1

Ben Walker
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Bob Stoops posed next to the crystal football and played along with a wave of photographers.

They asked him to look to the left, he did. They asked him to smile, he did. Any shot they wanted Wednesday inside a hotel ballroom, he gave them.

Then a shutterbug shouted to the Oklahoma coach, telling him to hold up his finger, showing who's No. 1.

Stoops tilted his head, stared at the guy and kept his hands still.

"Too soon," he said.

First, there's a game to play. The hurry-up Sooners and speedy Florida meet Thursday night for the BCS championship, a matchup that includes a pair of Heisman Trophy winners, an SEC vs. Big 12 debate and more than its share of trash talk.

Besides, enough teams already are claiming the top spot. Southern California, Utah and Texas hope their bowl wins impressed enough voters in The Associated Press poll, which will be released in the wee hours Friday.

Heck, how about New Hampshire for No. 1.

I think at some point it might happen. I didn't believe that a few years ago, but I feel the discussion is out of control.

—Urban Meyer
On a playoff system

Florida coach Urban Meyer said Wednesday, "I didn't believe that a few years ago, but I feel now the discussion is out of control. I can't imagine any guy that enjoys football not wishing that whoever's at. So I imagine at some point that might happen now.

As to whether or not it should be a tournament for eight, 16 teams, that's someone else's department.

"It's not my job to figure that out," Meyer said. "I think it would be hard. I don't know how you do it."