

NEWSBRIEFS

Museum classes

El Paso Museum of History, located at 510 N. Santa Fe St., will hold classes in Flamenco, Digital Photography, Belly Dance, and Conversational Spanish. The classes, which consist of eight weekly sessions held from January through March, are intended to provide individuals with personal growth opportunities.

- **Flamenco Class** will be held from 6-7 p.m., Thursdays, beginning January 8 to February 26. The class will introduce the art of Flamenco's basic skills and fundamentals including cuadro, theory, and structure. The class will be taught by Linda Gallegos. No previous dance experience is required. Comfortable clothing and hard soled and heeled shoes (no open toes) are recommended.

- **Digital Photography Class** will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m., Thursdays, January 15 to March 5. Participants will learn eight different photography fundamentals including landscape, photojournalism, portrait, storytelling, events, slow shutter, macro, and food. Participants should bring a digital camera and have knowledge on how to use it. The class is bilingual and taught by professional photographer Heriberto Ibarra.

- **Belly Dance Class** will be held from 7 to 8 p.m., Thursdays, from January 15 to March 5. Participants will learn the fundamentals of this ancient art through a belly dance workout taught by Sonia Flores and her daughter Seneé. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

- **Conversational Spanish Class** will be held from 10 to 11 a.m., Saturdays, January 10 to February 28. The class will acquaint students with everyday Spanish and introduce them to Spanish-speaking cultures. Participants will be provided an opportunity for language practice and cultural awareness through movies, songs and readings from Spain and Latin American countries. The class is taught by Diego Murcia. Individuals interested in enrolling for any of these classes may register in the museum gift store. Cost for the Flamenco, Belly Dance, and Conversational Spanish classes is \$10 for museum members and \$20 for non-museum members. Cost for

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– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

PUT THAT WALL UP – Construction workers are erecting the steel framework for the pavilion that will house the Digie wall at the entrance to the El Paso Museum of History. Already finalized are the concrete footings that will support the pavilion, and completion date is slated for February. The Digie wall will be an outdoor, 3-D exhibit that will allow local residents and out of town visitors to explore the cultures, geography, history, and people of this region.

Museum initiates Digie website, builds wall

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

The first-in-the-nation interactive digital wall is currently under construction at the El Paso Museum of History, and museum officials announced recently that they have initiated a website to complement the innovative technology.

The wall is being built near the museum's entrance, which is located at 510 N. Santa Fe Street.

The wall and website are referred to as Digie (Digital Information Gateway In El Paso) after holding a naming contest. Combined, they will allow individuals to upload photos to the system in different ways to share their culture, history, heritage, family, among other information, and eventually be able to see everything on the museum's digital wall.

The Digie wall will be 36 feet wide and 5 feet tall. It is the first one installed in the United States and second in

“Everybody has a camera now, and people are snapping pictures anytime and anywhere. With Digie, everybody has a chance to record history. They have a chance to photograph their parents, their friends at the park, anything; and uploading the images to Digie will make them a recording of history. Everybody will be able to participate in the process by collecting photographs.”

– Everett Thomas
El Paso Museum of History curator of Digie

the world. The first digital wall is located in Copenhagen, Denmark at the Museum of Copenhagen, which launched its multimedia installation in one of the town's central squares in April 2010.

According to museum representative Marilú Valenzuela Alemán, the world's newest digital wall is designed to feature images and videos of this region's history and culture. Visitors to the wall will be able to view one of five touch screens as they navigate their way through the collection. She said that individuals can presently upload their images using the Digie website by logging on to www.digie.org.

Once the images or videos are uploaded to the site, Everett Thomas, curator of Digie and the person responsible for the digital wall's content, will screen them to make sure they meet the terms of use and nothing inappropriate gets through, explained the museum representative. Once images are uploaded, it will take 24 to 48 hours for them to appear, she stated.

“While Digie will foster worldwide communication when it's complete, the job of constructing it has required global communication as well,” Aleman related. “City of El Paso project managers have worked with designers in New Zealand and manufacturers in Germany on some of the project's components,” she added. Construction of Digie and the pavilion to house it are funded by the 2012 Quality of Life bonds.

For more information, contact Alemán at (915) 351-3588 or send email to alemanmg@elpasotexas.gov.

Construction savings may fund new building

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

A possible \$17 million in savings from the construction of a highway to connect the new Tornillo-Guadalupe port of entry to Interstate 10 could be used to build a new administration building for the county, officials said.

County commissioners are considering building new administrative offices and having the El Paso County Courthouse primarily house the court system, a possible solution to overcrowding issues at the 13-floor glass building.

But the construction of a new building Downtown will depend mostly on the

Many an argument is sound – and only sound.

– Quips & Quotes

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Finances

By Jason Alderman

Yours, mine and ours: Planning stepfamily finances

The Pew Research Center reports (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/>) that four in ten American adults have at least one steprelative, defined as a stepparent, a step-or-half

sibling or a stepchild, in their family. While the Pew study says that many stepfamilies operate harmoniously, it also notes that adults “feel a stronger sense of obligation to their biological family members than they do to their step kin.”

That is one reason why blended family finances can get so messy.

Couples planning to blend families often have to make financial arrangements that respect previous relationships with ex-spouses and their families. Issues range from childcare and eldercare to potentially complex matters involving businesses, investment assets and real estate. That’s why involving trained experts in stepfamily financial planning is a must.

Here’s a basic checklist of issues and solutions potential spouses and partners should consider:

Start with all cards on the table. Today’s first-time marriages or partnerships alone can introduce some staggering financial variables – business and inheritance issues, college debt, consumer debt or even past bankruptcies. Couples planning stepfamilies face even more complications. But all couples need to start with a critical first step – sharing personal information with a potential impact on finances. Start with the following:

- Current credit reports and credit scores. Extensive loans or bad credit for one or both partners can endanger future purchasing plans for auto, home or tuition. It’s also important to share information about personal or cosigned loans to family and friends.

- Assets and liabilities. Potential spouses or partners should know each other’s financial assets and liabilities and any issues connected with them. As mentioned above, debt and credit issues may be a problem, but if one spouse has extensive assets, it’s important to clarify whether those assets will be shared legally or promised to others.

- Legal issues. If divorce, child custody, foreclosure, bankruptcy, or any other civil or criminal legal proceedings are pending against either partner or members of their families, full disclosure is essential.

- Business and estate issues. If potential spouses or partners have significant estate or business assets assigned to children, former spouses or family members, those commitments need to be factored into the finances of the planned marriage or partnership.

Bring in professional expertise. Beyond disclosure, it’s good to have qualified professionals who have specific expertise with blended families and their many unique issues. Both partners should start by bringing any existing advisors into the discussion. But if none exist and friends and family members don’t have solid suggestions, the following organizations might provide local experts with specific skills in helping stepfamilies plan:

- Financial planners. The Association for Financial Counseling, Planning and Education and the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards are two nationwide organizations that can identify advisors in your area.
- Tax advisors. Your state CPA

society can suggest qualified personal, business and estate tax advisors in your area.

- Estate planners and attorneys. Organizations like the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils and the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel might be able to help.

Address problems before move-in. Most experts tell you it’s best to start any new marriage or partnership with a clean slate – or a slate that’s as clean as you can make it. That’s doubly true with stepfamilies. As many income, asset, debt, child custody, estate and business issues as possible should be identified and solutions put in place before the family is legally joined.

Make a fresh estate plan. Financial experts say it’s time to review all money issues whenever you face a major life event, and remarriage or re-partnership certainly qualifies. Even if the individuals have their own separate estate matters in order, stepfamily issues restart the planning clock on everything.

Plan – or re-plan – your retirement. You may have planned a great retirement with a former spouse or on your own, but what if your future spouse hasn’t? Whatever steps you’ve both taken toward retirement, you need to review your strategies so you can retire comfortably together.

Bottom line: Money issues complicate all relationships. But stepfamilies have unique, detailed planning needs that should be discussed and settled before marriage or move-in.

Jason Alderman directs Visa’s financial education programs.

Veterans Post

By Freddy Groves

VA hooks up with whiz-bang computer

The Department of Veterans Affairs is now going super high-tech in its approach to medical treatments.

If you’re a fan of the television game-show “Jeopardy!” you might have seen the segment back in 2011 when a computer system named Watson competed against former winners. Millions of pages of content had been programmed into the computer, including whole encyclopedias and dictionaries, in question/answer format in preparation for the event. Of course the computer won, and not only because its answers were a circuit blink away when the humans had to actually reach out to a button to press it. The computer was able to analyze information, parse language, decide and offer answers in seconds.

Fast-forward to 2013, when IBM hooked up with Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center to provide clinical support decision “answers” in lung-cancer treatment. Instead of a search function with possible answers ranked by relevance, the computer hunts through all the available information

(including specific patient files, journal articles and studies), responds to questions in natural language and comes up with a treatment.

The VA is hooking up with Watson. It has initiated a two-year, \$6.8 million contract to use Watson to search electronic medical records and literature for relevant studies. According to a VA.gov press release, during that two years it will assess how Watson does with speeding up evidence-based clinical decisions. No medical decisions will be made for actual patients, only simulations will be run.

In the end, if it works as well as is hoped, VA doctors will be able to get all the pertinent information in a very short amount of time, leaving them more time to spend with veteran patients.

Freddy Groves regrets that he cannot personally answer reader questions, but will incorporate them into his column whenever possible. Send email to columnreply2@gmail.com. (c) 2014 King Features Synd., Inc.



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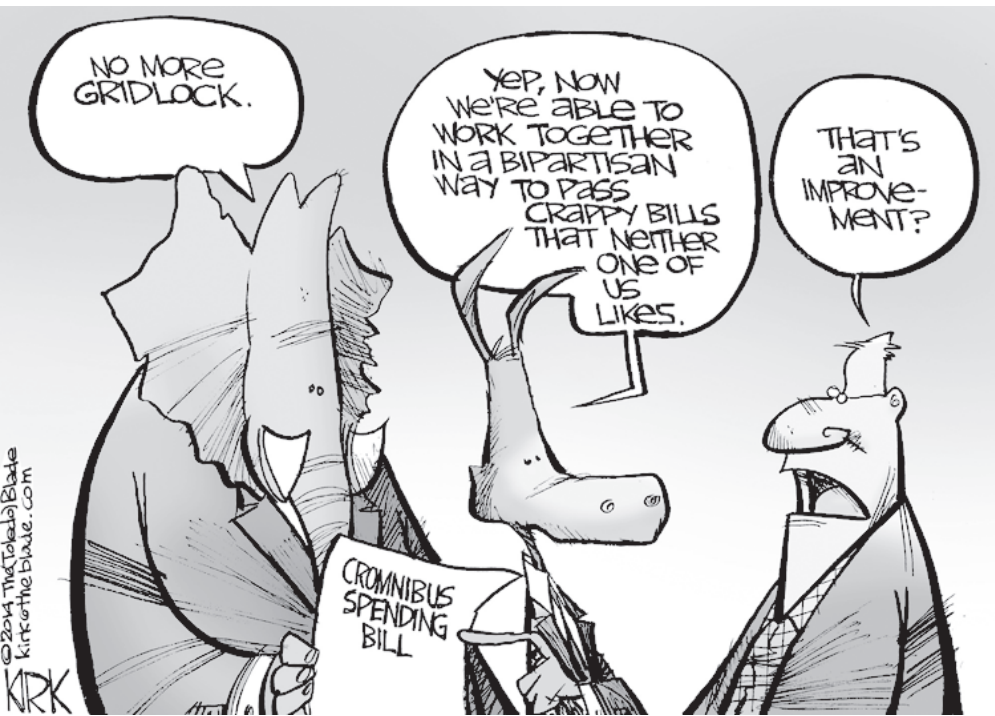
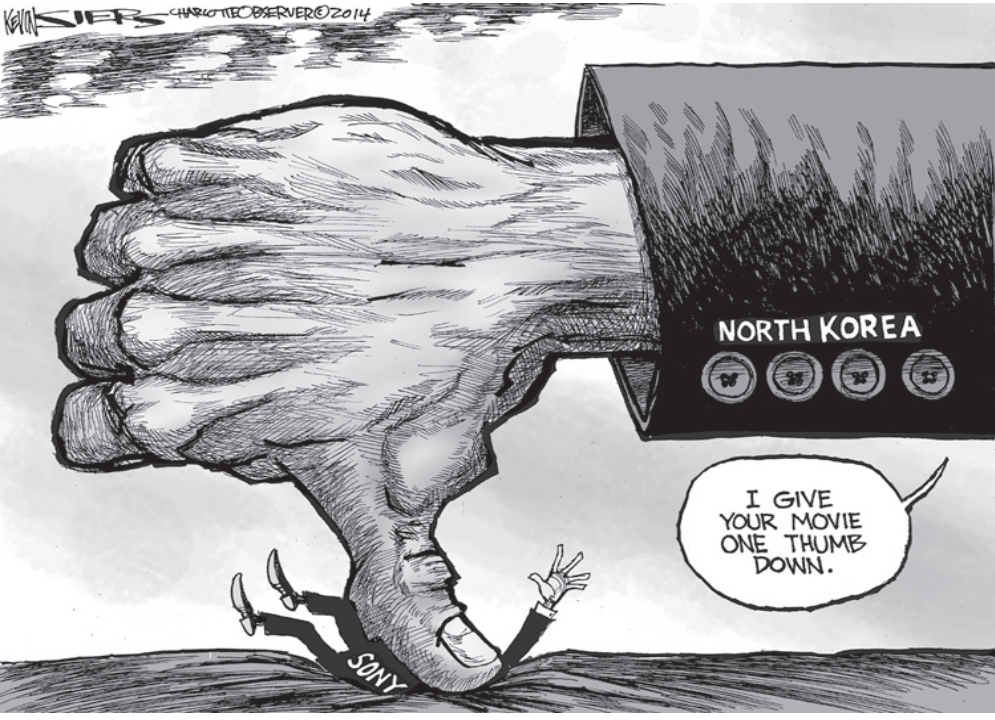
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It's the law

By Texas AG Greg Abbott

What Texans should know about providing their Social Security Number

According to the Federal Trade Commission, Texas ranks eighth in the nation for identity theft complaints. In 2013, more than 23,000 Texans were identity theft victims and as a result, lost thousands of dollars and hours of time attempting to correct their credit ratings and personal financial history.

Identity theft occurs when a criminal illegally uses someone else's personal information – a name, address, driver's license number, credit or debit card account number or Social Security number – to commit fraud or other crimes.

Fortunately, increased identity theft awareness has made Texans much more cautious about freely providing their personal information. One particularly sensitive part of a person's identity is his or her Social Security number (SSN). Many Texans call the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to ask when and where they are required to give out their SSN.

One of our most commonly received questions on this subject is, "Can a private business ask for my Social Security number?" Generally, the answer is yes. The law does not prohibit a business from asking for a person's SSN; however, the customer has options and does not have to provide that information.

Texans are not legally required to provide their SSN to private businesses unless the transaction is one which triggers mandatory Internal Revenue Service notification. Texans should be aware, though, that businesses can refuse to provide products or services to customers who fail to provide their SSN.

If a business insists that customers provide their SSN and customers feel this is not justified, customers may want to ask for a supervisor or manager to discuss the situation. If the company is unwilling to budge, Texans may want to consider taking their business elsewhere.

Be aware that while federal law does not forbid a business from asking for a person's SSN, it does mandate that the

business protect any numbers it collects. People who provide their SSN to a private business should familiarize themselves with the company's privacy policy.

Texas law also requires that businesses safeguard their clients' sensitive personal information, including names, addresses, financial information and SSN. The OAG has charged several commercial vendors with unlawfully failing to protect such information.

Many Texans also inquire about government agencies and whether they have the right to ask for a person's SSN. Federal law does compel government agencies to ask for a SSN in certain instances.

Forexample, certain government agencies, including taxing authorities, human resource offices and departments of motor vehicles, can require a SSN as mandated by federal law.

Federal law does provide protections when citizens are required to divulge their SSN. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that all government agencies that request Social Security numbers provide a disclosure statement on the form. The statement explains whether citizens are required to provide their SSN or if it is optional. Additionally, the document details how a person's SSN will be used.

The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the U. S. Office of Management and Budget provides guidance and oversight regarding the Privacy Act of 1974. Interested Texans may read the Act on the U.S. Department of Justice Web site at www.usdoj.gov.

The Privacy Act also provides that citizens cannot be denied government benefits or services if they refuse to disclose their SSN – if the disclosure is not required by federal law or if the disclosure is to an agency which has been using SSNs prior to January 1975.

Texans who are asked to give their SSN to a government agency but do not receive a disclosure statement may want to cite the Privacy Act and contact their U.S. congressmen or senators.

Points to remember

- You do NOT have to give your SSN to a private business.
- If you do give your SSN to a business, get a copy of their privacy policy.
- If you are required to give your SSN to a government agency, you must be provided with a disclosure statement.
- NEVER give out your SSN or other personal information over the phone or by e-mail.
- Report ID theft to your local police department.
- File an ID theft complaint on FTC's website at www.ftc.gov or call (877) ID THEFT.

For more information about this or other topics, visit our website at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.

The write stuff

Greetings readers and writers,

Over the last few months the *Courier* has received some nice submissions that were not used for various reasons. Please include a name and contact

number, send via email (we do not re-type submissions) and all letters must include a name and city/area for print.

– Rick Shrum
Publisher

Briefs

From Page 1

the Digital Photography class is \$15 for museum members and \$30 for non-museum members. The classes

are open to adults and children nine years and older. For more information, contact the El Paso Museum of History Educator Jaime Knoedler, at (915) 351-3588 or send email to knoedlerjm@elpasotexas.gov.

– Alfredo Vasquez



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www.YourDiabetesInfo.org

A message from the National Diabetes Education Program, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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CryptoQuip Answer

When I was crying in a dance club that had strobe lights, could you say I had a disco bawl?

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Building

From Page 1

approval of a \$17 million grant from the Federal Highway Administration to build a road from the Texas State Highway 20, also known as Alameda Avenue, to the freeway.

County Judge Veronica Escobar said that during the issuance of the 2012 certificates of obligation, commissioners decided that if the county was able to find grants to build the road, the money could be used to solve the lack of space at the courthouse.

“Because we knew there was a possibility of us getting outside funding, we discussed we need a Plan B for that funding,” Escobar said. “While the county has a lot of needs, one of the things Commissioners Court decided to put into the bonds was to build a facility on property the county already owns.”

In June 2012, court approved the sale of \$110 million in certificates of obligation for capital construction and equipment needs, including \$27 million to build the bridge of the new Tornillo-Guadalupe port of entry and its connecting roads.

Ernie Carrizal, director of the county’s Public Works Department, said the county has applied for the federal grant and believes there is a great possibility it will receive the funding.

“All comments have been positive,” he said, referring to his conversations with FHA officials.

Carrizal said he does not know when the county will be notified if it received the grant. He said the FHA is in the process of approving an environmental assessment, which is part of the application.

Carrizal hopes to hear back from the FHA early next year, he

said.

“If we are able to get the funding for the highway, that means we are going to have the \$17 million for the Downtown building,” Escobar told commissioners on Monday.

She said a possible location is the parking lot across the street from the county’s MDR Building at 800 E. Overland near the municipal court.

The new building might house the commissioners, the Elections Department and the district and county clerk offices, while the courts would remain in the courthouse.

There are now 38 judges’

offices housed in the courthouse.

Escobar said county officials have been dealing with lack of space at the courthouse, including space at the parking garage, since she first was elected commissioner about seven years ago.

She said offices have been built in the basement of the courthouse, cubicles have been added to existing offices and closets have been converted into offices to maximize space usage.

However, commissioners need to come up with a long-term solution, Escobar said.

“While there was a 20-year

plan initially for the courthouse, we probably outgrew the courthouse a decade ago,” Escobar said.

“We’ve not done a good job historically of planning for the future. We have more courts today than we had a decade ago,” she added.

Commissioner Carlos Leon said he understands the courthouse is crowded, but he would like to study the issue extensively before even thinking about building a new facility.

While there might be some money left, he doesn’t know if the \$17 million will be enough to build a new facility, he said.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

• It was American author Gail Kathleen Godwin who made the following sage observation: “Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater.”

• Elizabeth Montgomery, best known for playing the witch Samantha in the TV sitcom “Bewitched,” in 1975 played the title role in the TV movie “The Legend of Lizzie Borden.” This would not be remarkable, except that a genealogist later showed that Montgomery and the notorious axe-murderer were actually sixth cousins once removed.

• Those who study such things say that if you grew up in the era before color TV, you’re more likely to dream in black and white.

• In April 2014, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission moved to forbid the sale of stuffed baby alligators in “an unnatural body or body part positioning” – including upright human poses.

• You might be surprised to learn that during the Revolutionary War, only one out of every six able-bodied men in the American colonies actually took up arms.

• John Pemberton, the inventor of Coca-Cola, came up with the recipe by boiling coca leaves, kola nuts and a variety of herbs in a pot in his backyard. It was originally sold in his drugstore as a “nerve medicine.”

• It’s well-known that camels are able to go long periods of time without access to water, but biologists say that giraffes are able to survive even longer than camels when deprived of moisture.

• In the 18th century, so-called anatomical demonstrations became very popular. At the time, museums, colleges, private homes and even bars hosted public dissections of human corpses. Competition to obtain the sometimes-costly tickets to these events was fierce, and the crowds attending often were raucous.

Thought for the Day: “I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I have ever known.”

– Walt Disney

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This year’s Miner squad could be dancing at the end

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

After going through one of the toughest pre-conference schedules in its famed history, the UTEP Miners will begin CUSA play this weekend at North Texas and at Rice.

Being able to get off to a fast start is even more important considering that, of the Miners first seven league games, five are on the road.

But going into the start of 2015 one thing is for certain – the Miners are battle tested.

After taking on the likes of Xavier, Princeton, Washington State, Washington, Arizona, Kent State, Colorado State, and NMSU (twice), the UTEP players have already faced teams tougher than they’ll meet over the next three months.

And because of that, the Miners should enjoy a top seed by the time they play in the CUSA Tournament in March.

But the reason the Miners should win the regular season and league tournament may surprise you. This season was going

to be defined by the top three seniors on the team, Julian Washburn, Cedrick Lang and CJ Cooper.

And while all three have contributed to the overall success of the team, only one of the seniors has met or exceeded expectations coming into the season – Lang.

Both Washburn and Cooper have been slow coming out of the gate and must start playing more aggressively – it’s their last season after all.

The main reason for the team’s success has to do with the younger, or newer, guys.

Sophomore Vince Hunter is a double-double machine and is already the best player in the league. Just don’t let him know.

Freshman point guard Omega Harris changes the whole look of the team. From the first day he walked on the court he’s been fearless and a leader. He is one of the quickest guys in the league and when his feet start to matchup with his mind, he’ll be the best in the league.

Junior college transfer Earvin Morris may be the best shooter on the team and

one of the few guys who can create his own shot whenever he wants it.

Morris has been a pleasant surprise and has also shown no fear in his new surroundings.

Even skinny sophomore center Matt Willms is beginning to believe he is actually 7-feet tall.

After a year of playing through injury, Willms, who still isn’t quite 100 percent, was beginning to resemble so many UTEP centers of the past. A big guy who couldn’t score, rebound or hang on to the ball if he accidentally did rebound it.

But the big guy has actually developed a bit of a mean streak rebounding the basketball and fighting for it when other guys try to take it away. Willms could add on another 40 pounds of muscle, and after he does – watch out for the next two years.

However, this year’s mix of young guys and veterans is starting to become one. When a bunch of guys are thrown together it will always take time for them to get comfortable.

And it’s pretty tough to be in the process of getting to know each other while playing some of the better teams in

the nation.

The Miners are 8-4 and have lost to Washington, NMSU, Colorado State and Arizona. All four are teams that we’ll see in the NCAA Tournament at the end of the season.

Here’s another thing – the Miners could have easily won all four games. That says a lot about a team still trying to find its way.

That is a tribute to coach Tim Floyd and the work of his assistants. One thing Floyd has always done is get his teams to play their best at the right time.

And the Miners are going into conference play running on all cylinders. A lot will be determined over their first seven games.

If UTEP can win at least three of those first five road games, they’ll be well on their way.

Half of the challenge of winning any title is the belief that you can do it. This group of Miners totally expects to be watching the NCAA selection show in March, seeing who and where they’ll be dancing.

And barring any unforeseen surprises, UTEP will be in that dance – and the young guys will lead them.

A sporting view By Mark Vasto

We’ll always have Washington

Americans say they are big on nostalgia, but facts and a simple conversation with anyone under the age of 40 disproves this.

Ask any of them to name the oldest thing in America they know of, and chances are they will say “the Grand Canyon,” nothing at all, or something that doesn’t make any sense, like “George Washington.” Contrast

this with just about any place in Europe, where a restaurant in, say, Venice, can have a picture of Caesar Augustus hanging by a nail on the wall that was placed there in the year 7 – not seven years ago, not seven decades ago, not seven centuries ago – the seventh year of the Julian calendar.

Nowhere are we more fickle a

republic than in our treatment of sporting venues. In a world that venerates their championship venues and preserves their amphitheaters as monuments and shrines, America, in its never-ending pursuit of wider concourses, takes near-sadistic glee in applying the wrecking ball to its stadia. We have guest-room mattresses older than our stadiums.

There are exceptions. Populus builds nice stadiums: Camden Yards, for instance. Kauffman Stadium. There are others, I

know. And the gems are still there: Fenway and Wrigley (which is a smelly dump, but an exceptional one that is worthy of our love and the recent renovation), Lambeau Field, the Big House. The rest are parking lots (Atlanta-Fulton County), malls (Metropolitan) or tenements (Ebbets).

A few years ago we lost Giants Stadium. That led to a parking lot and a mediocre Springsteen album. Before that, Yankee Stadium. The new stadium is so bad that it defies description. How those geniuses missed the fact that you can’t see half the field from the bleachers because the view is blocked by a steakhouse or some other nonsense remains

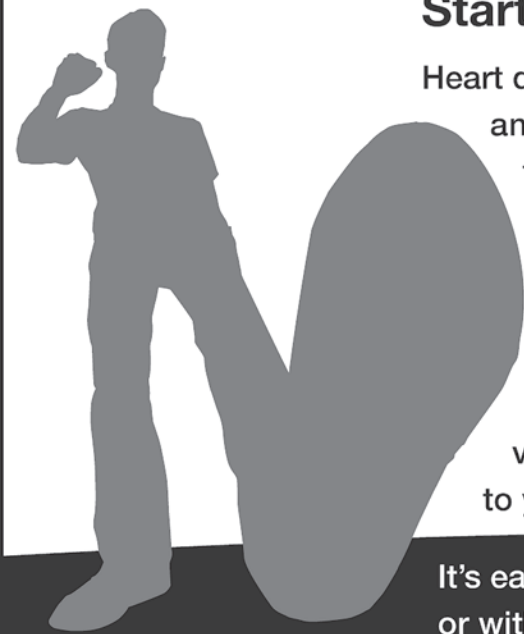
one of the great mysteries of our time.

Sometimes it’s for the better, however. Detroit – Detroit! – is doing something right for a change. Tiger Stadium, now a vacant, needle-strewn lot, is about to become the city’s Police Athletic League complex. According to officials, the project will include a restored baseball field with a gated entryway, ticket booth, historic memorabilia, lights, scoreboard, covered dugouts, home-run fence, seating for 2,500 spectators, covered pavilion and locker rooms.

Also finally blotted off the

See SPORTING, Page 8

Take the First Step to a Heart-Healthy Life.
Start! Walking. Start! Something.



Heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in America. But did you know that just 30 minutes a day of physical activity can improve your health and decrease your risk of heart disease?

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5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40

Deadline: Mondays
Please print. Send form and
payment (no cash) to:
West Texas County Courier
15344 Werling Ct.
Horizon City, TX 79928

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

MOORE TEXAS

by Roger Todd Moore

Dec.22,1996 :The Houston Oilers play their last game in Houston and officially head for Tennessee.



GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

DIFFICULTY: ★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

	+		×		40
+		-		×	
	-		×		28
×		×		+	
	×		+		32
30		40		28	

1 2 3 4 5 7 8 8 9

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

	1				6			2
9				4			8	
		2	5			9		
	9		7				4	3
7					5	1		
		1		6			5	
2		6		8				1
		4			9	5		
	3		2				7	

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Challenging
Answer Page 4 ★★★★★ HOO BOY!

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Social Security Q&A By Ray Vigil

Unflinching in the fight against fraud

If you’re like most people, you protect what’s valuable to you. To protect your family financially, you buy health and life insurance. To protect your home, you get homeowner’s insurance, a security alarm, or perhaps a large dog. To protect your jewelry, you hide it in a safe place or buy insurance in case you need to replace it. To protect your money, you invest it, perhaps in a bank that offers FDIC coverage.

Social Security is much the same. We value the people we serve, our employees who work hard to provide world-class customer service, and the integrity of our programs. We protect these by using many tools to identify, prevent, and stop fraud, and we seek the maximum punishment for those who commit it.

The tools we use help us predict where fraud may occur, and, by monitoring cases closely, we identify fraud sooner rather than later. We also have stiff penalties that discourage people from committing fraud.

Social Security has a zero-tolerance policy for fraud. While we cannot prevent every instance of fraud any more than law enforcement can prevent all crime, we aggressively investigate and pursue prosecution of those who try to cheat the system. Our message to those who would defraud Social Security is clear: We will find you; we will prosecute you; we will seek the maximum punishment allowable under the law; and we will fight to restore to the American public the money you’ve stolen.

Social Security takes fraud seriously and so should you. If you suspect someone is committing Social Security fraud, report it online at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report> or call the Social Security Fraud Hotline at 1-800-269-0271.

Q: When a person who has worked and paid Social Security taxes dies, who is eligible for survivors benefits?

A: Social Security survivors benefits can be paid to:

• Widows or widowers – unreduced benefits at full retirement age, or reduced benefits as early as age 60;

• Disabled widows or widowers – as early as age 50;

• Widows or widowers at any age if they take care of the deceased’s child who is under age 16 or disabled and receiving Social Security benefits;

• Unmarried children under age 18, or up to age 19 if they are attending secondary school full time. Under certain

circumstances, benefits can be paid to stepchildren and grandchildren;

• Children at any age who were disabled before age 22 and remain disabled; and

• Dependent parents age 62 or older.

Even if you are divorced, you still may qualify for survivors benefits. For more information, go to www.socialsecurity.gov.

CRYPTOQUIP

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: Z equals Y

VOQG B VHU IMZBGT BG H

YHGIQ IKWL ROHR OHY URMNLQ

KBTORU, INWKY ZNW UHZ B OHY

H YBUIN LHVK?

Answer Page 4

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SPORTING

From Page 6

face of the Earth is the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, the worst baseball stadium since the Polo Grounds. At least the Polo Grounds, with its quirky ground rules, had gravitas; the Metrodome, with its crappy ground rules, had what? Gravity? Hit a ball off the speaker, and if you catch it, it’s an out? If the ball hits the hefty bag in right, it’s in play, but if it gets caught in the roof, it’s a double? What was that? Baseball or backyard Wiffle ball? Yes, Jack Morris and Kirby Puckett turned in some of the game’s greatest performances there, but you half expected to see their mom come out and tell them to let their sister play, too.

But hey, it’s not all that bad. We’ve got better roads than Venice, at least. And George Washington, who could forget him, right?

Mark Vasto is a veteran sportswriter who lives in Kansas City. (c) 2014 King Features Synd., Inc.