

AROUND NEW MEXICO

Staff and Wire Reports

Liquor Sellers To Be Punished

SANTA FE — Liquor establishments in Las Cruces and Gallup must pay fines and halt liquor sales for at least a day for either selling alcohol to minors or selling liquor to an intoxicated person.

The owners of the three businesses have reached a compromise agreement with the New Mexico Alcohol and Gaming Division.

Brewer Oil Company's Country Club Shell in Las Cruces was cited on June 11 for selling alcohol to an intoxicated person. It was fined \$1,000 and its liquor sales will be suspended on Feb. 26 and part of Feb. 27.

On the same day, the company's Nacho Shell in Las Cruces was cited for the same violation.

It was also fined \$1,000 and its liquor sales will be suspended on Feb. 12 and the morning of Feb. 13, according to the state division.

Patrick's Liquor Warehouse in Gallup was cited in November for alcohol sales to a minor.

N.M. Dem Backs Dean for Chairman

SANTA FE — The chairman of the Democratic Party of New Mexico has endorsed former Vermont governor and one-time presidential candidate Howard Dean as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

"Dr. Dean has earned the respect of countless thousands for his record as governor — a record of balancing budgets, providing health care for children, expanding educational opportunity, and protecting equal rights," chairman John Wertheim said in a statement Thursday.

The committee is scheduled to select a new leader later this month in Washington, D.C.



WERTHEIM: Backs Howard Dean for DNC chairman

Police Called To Prison Incident

LAS CRUCES — State Police and Las Cruces police were called to the Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility on Wednesday after some inmates caused a minor disturbance.

Deputy warden Steve Nance said a preliminary investigation indicated that as many as 12 inmates may have been involved.

Authorities were called as a precaution after some inmates refused to return to their bunks, Nance said.

Other inmates living in the dormitory were removed and correctional officers conducted a search. No force was used and there were no injuries or damage caused.

Veteran Cop Is Interim Chief

SILVER CITY — A longtime member of the Silver City Police Department has been named interim chief.

Town Manager Alex Brown appointed Ed Reynolds on Wednesday to replace John Calender, who resigned.

Reynolds has been with the department for more than two decades.

He began as a patrolman in 1979, worked up through the ranks and became deputy chief in 1998. He later retired from the department but returned in April 2000.

Violence Prompts Travel Warning

TUCSON — Citing growing violence along the border, University of Arizona officials are advising students that they should avoid traveling to Mexico during spring break.

The university issued a warning Tuesday in the wake of a Jan. 26 travel alert from the U.S. State Department.

Arizona State University issued a similar warning Thursday, urging students to be aware of possible dangers.

N.M. Waiting on Flu Shots

150,000 Doses Not Delivered

By JACKIE JADRNAK
Journal Staff Writer

Three months ago, New Mexico scrambled to grab a share of 700,000 doses of flu vaccine that Illinois found from a foreign supplier.

So far, none of the vaccine has arrived.

New Mexico Health Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham said this week she is fully committed to paying for the 150,000 doses, but only if she gets her hands on them. The bill, at \$10 per dose, would be \$1.5 million.

She said she's still interested in getting the vaccine. Although most people get their shots in the fall, flu season lasts through March. "We had two recent deaths (from influenza)," she said.

"We never would be involved in a situation where we would make a wasteful purchase."

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM,
NEW MEXICO
HEALTH SECRETARY



The state confirmed the influenza infections Wednesday in two middle-aged adults from Curry and Bernalillo counties. The department did not release any other information about the deaths or the victims.

Illinois officials argued last week that they expect all the other governments that jumped on board — New York City wanted 200,000 shots and Cleveland asked for 4,500 — to pay for their share. But then that state's chief financial officer argued that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's failure to approve importation of those doses should constitute a valid reason to cancel the purchase contract, according to news reports.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said last week he wouldn't pay for that city's doses, but then reconsidered, promising through a spokesman to pay the bill.

Grisham said she doesn't think anyone should have to

pay if the vaccine isn't delivered. The distributor was taking a risk in selling the vaccine to a country that hadn't approved it for use here, she said. But she also acknowledged that the state shared in the risk by agreeing to buy non-approved vaccine.

Grisham said she hasn't set a drop-dead date by which she'd no longer accept vaccine delivery. "We never would be involved in a situation where we would make a wasteful purchase," she added.

The Lovelace Sandia Health System has about 3,000 doses, and Presbyterian Healthcare has "a full supply," according to spokesmen for those systems. The University of New Mexico Hospital pharmacy is out of vaccine, but clinics may still have some.

Spokesmen for all those groups said demand for flu shots is declining. "It's fairly minimal," said Presbyterian

spokesman Todd Sandman. Grisham refused to say what she would do if the vaccine isn't allowed into the country on a timely basis and Illinois is stuck with the bill. Would she feel an ethical commitment to pay \$1.5 million? There are too many "what-ifs" to answer that question, she said.

In response to a Journal request for documentation related to the agreement to purchase the vaccines, Grisham and Jessica Sutin, the governor's health policy adviser, said none exists. "All we could find were news releases," Sutin said.

The agreement was verbal, they said. After the vaccines got to this country, New Mexico intended to go through its standard procurement process to purchase them, Grisham said.

Material from The Associated Press was used in this story.

TRAINING BY FIRE



VLADIMIR CHALOUPKA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lt. Russell Smith of the Las Cruces Fire Department talks on the radio as fellow firefighters prepare to extinguish a blaze in a Cessna plane mockup at Las Cruces International Airport on Wednesday. The annual training exercise also included snuffing out a fire in a Boeing 727 fuselage.

High Uranium Levels Found in Water Wells

Half of Samples Exceed Standards

By ADAM RANKIN
Journal Northern Bureau

LOS ALAMOS — Many private drinking water wells in Pojoaque, Nambé and Tesuque have high levels of naturally occurring uranium, in many cases well above federal standards.

Of the 447 water samples collected last summer and fall, about half exceed the 30 parts per billion drinking water standard. Of the samples that exceeded the standard, about 10 percent were 10 times more than the limit or higher.

"We got some that were 100 times the standard, actually more than that, one was about 300 times the standard," said Steve Wust, hydrologist for Santa Fe County, which helped organize the testing.

The Environmental Protection Agency reports that total uranium levels above 30 parts per billion increase the risk of kidney failure from chemical toxicity, as well as potential carcinogenic effects from its radioactive decay.

"I knew there was uranium around, but I was surprised to see both how many there were (above the standard) and how high they were," Wust said, adding that results are still being interpreted and mapped and that all resi-

dents who supplied water for testing have been notified of the results and which constituents are above safe drinking water standards.

The water samples were collected at a series of water fairs in Nambé and Tesuque and two in Pojoaque, then tested with the cooperation of the state Environment Department and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Wust said the county, LANL's Water Research Technical Assistance Office and NMED are planning to hold a public meeting in Pojoaque, possibly in April, to explain the results and the long-term health risks.

The uranium is a naturally occurring element in much of the area's deep, underlying basement igneous and metamorphic rock, as well as in volcanic tuff found closer to the surface, Wust said.

The highest readings were from water taken nearest the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, where the basement rock is closest to the surface, he said.

Uranium wasn't the primary concern going into the sampling, which was set up to evaluate the potential need for a regional waste water treatment facility, he said.

"We expected to see that if we were getting contamination from septic tanks that we should see a lot of nitrate; we didn't see much nitrate at all, but we did see a lot of uranium," he said.

Museum Deal Called Too Costly for State

\$800,000 a year sought to operate Hubbard site

The Associated Press

SANTA FE — A critic of a proposal by Gov. Bill Richardson to accept the donation of the private Hubbard Museum of the American West in Ruidoso Downs contends it would drain the state financially.

The museum, owned by R.D. and Joan Dale Hubbard, would become a division of the state Department of Cultural Affairs under a bill introduced in the 2005 Legislature. The legislation includes \$800,000 a year to run the museum, which has about two dozen employees and a budget of about \$1.3 million.

The Hubbards offered the museum and its collection of cowboy art and artifacts along with a one-time gift of \$1 million to support the museum after its transfer to the state.

They also propose to donate six recently restored structures in historic Lincoln, which would complete the Museum of New Mexico's Lincoln Monument.

R.D. Hubbard cannot endow the museum in perpetuity but "wants to see it stay a museum for the people of Ruidoso and Lincoln," Cultural Affairs Secretary Stuart Ashman said.

The museum generates about \$500,000 in annual revenue from admissions, sales and fund-raising, Ashman said.

quent critic of museum practices, said the museum is an "old albatross."

Besser said he believes R.D. Hubbard and Richardson cut a deal that will ultimately save the businessman the money he now puts in to meet the museum's expenses.

Hubbard, a contributor to the governor's 2002 campaign, owns 71 percent of the Ruidoso Downs track and casino and 55 percent of Zia Park in Hobbs.

"It was shoved down (the department's) throat" while current museums are "dying for money," Besser said.

Ashman said his office weighed the liabilities and decided to recommend accepting the donation.

"Our job is to judge whether or not something is of benefit to the state, and in this case, we thought it was," he said.

The museum is being offered at a time when the Office of Cultural Affairs faces higher insurance costs and flat budgets, but Ashman said his office is not running a deficit. "We're exactly where we're supposed to be six months into the year," he said.

If legislators approve the acquisition, the Ruidoso Downs museum would have the same status as the Museum of Natural History and Science in Albuquerque or the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces.

The 52,000-square-foot museum was opened in 1992 as the Museum of the Horse to house the Hubbards' artwork and Western artifacts.

'Ultima' Banned At Colo. School

Local Author Says To 'Read the Book'

The Associated Press

NORWOOD, Colo. — The superintendent of schools has banned Rudolfo Anaya's acclaimed book "Bless Me, Ultima" at Norwood High School, saying it is too profane for the 96 students there.

Superintendent Bob Conder said some parents were offended by obscene language and paganistic practices in the 1972 coming-of-age novel about a 7-year-old boy and his life with his Roman Catholic mother, Luna, and Ultima, who uses herbs and magic to heal.

"It's less a matter of censorship than a matter of sponsorship. That's not the kind of garbage I want to sponsor at this high school," Conder said Wednesday.

Conder — who hasn't read the entire book — gave more than two dozen "Bless Me, Ultima" copies to a parent to destroy. The teacher who ordered the book has apologized in a letter to parents and won't be disciplined, he said.

Conder has not pulled any other book from classrooms during his six years as superintendent.

He said just one parent in the southwestern Colorado community has complained, but Norwood Post editor Margo Roberts said she has been inundated by messages from people angry about Conder's action.

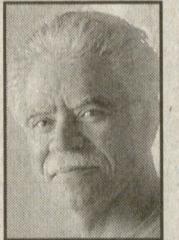
Norwood High School junior Christian Skyler Kelley wrote a letter to the editor criticizing Conder.

"I never knew this book existed," Kelley said. "Now I feel it is my obligation to read it and see what our superintendent found so dangerous that it must be destroyed."

Anaya, widely considered the founder of modern Chicano literature and a professor emeritus of English at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, said he wasn't surprised parents and educators who haven't read the book would be frightened by its harsh language.

"My suggestion is: Read the book. The language is not gratuitous. It fits with the scenes," said Anaya, 67. "I have hundreds of letters from students from all over the country who have been moved by this book. I would love to go to Norwood with my box full of letters."

Other Colorado communities have embraced "Bless Me, Ultima." The book is part of the English curriculum at Montrose High School and has been chosen for community reading programs in Boulder and Mesa County.



ANAYA: Considered founder of modern Chicano literature