



# Human Interest

Central Talent Book

Monday, January 4, 2010



## Man takes couch potato trophy after sitting for 48 hours in ESPN Zone in Times Sq.

He's the tater-nator of 2010. Newly crowned champion couch potato Jorge Cruz creamed his competition by sitting - and noshing - for 48 hours straight at the ESPN Zone in Times Square. "You become one with the couch," said Cruz, 26, of Washington Heights. Cruz mashed the previous record by an amazing 19 hours to win the third annual veg-out contest. It was a no-brainer for the sedentary Cruz to enter the sofa smackdown. "They'll bring me free food to sit here and watch sports? I thought, 'Sounds like a win-win,'" Cruz said. "I come here all the time anyway." Four contestants took their

spots in the sports bar's recliners at 11 a.m. on New Year's Day, ready to watch the weekend's sports smorgasbord on a wall of TV screens. With only hourly stretch breaks and bathroom visits spaced eight hours apart, the other contestants fell by the wayside one after another. The final holdouts, a husband-and-wife team, sputtered out early Sunday morning, leaving Cruz to win the crown.

## Paratrooper who lost legs is British skydive champ

When paratrooper Alistair Hodgson was blown up by –terrorists he begged a friend to put him out of his misery. "One leg was gone, the other was just mashed up bone held together with nerves and veins," he says. "When the first guy got to me I said, 'Just shoot me. You can't leave me like this'." "He told me to f\*\*\* off and thank God he did. He fetched a paramedic for me, put on tourniquets and saved my life." That was 17 years ago on the streets of Northern Ireland. Today Alistair is the British National Freestyle Skydiving –Champion and in August will make a bid for the world title, –competing on an equal basis with the able-bodied. And his tale of triumph against the –harshes of adversity is one he hopes will inspire those young men returning limbless from Afghanistan, who find themselves in the same position he was in – driven men who are left with nothing to aim for. Alistair, 39, says: "I see news footage of guys coming back from war just as mashed up as me. Everyone says, 'Oh, that's dreadful', but then they forget all about them. "Those guys are left to get on with the rest of their lives, often with hardly any compensation and living on benefits, pretty much on the breadline and without any kind of career.



"They've fought to look after their country and, just when they need it, their country doesn't do much to look after them. They were once fit and strong, but it's all been taken away. "It's so hard. But you have to rehabilitate yourself, find a focus...something to hold on to. If I can inspire just one other person to lift themselves out of that same dark place I was in – train for the Paralympics in 2012 or something, then it's worth it. ([Read Full Story](#))

### Iowa veterans gain freedom, family through foster program

Winterset, Ia. - If they weren't living in Joe Wymer's house, Vietnam War veterans Ron Marusek and Bob Fenoglio would be in a nursing home by now. Marusek, 65, has terminal cancer. Fenoglio, 67, has a severe case of multiple sclerosis. Both decided to enroll in a new federal program in which veterans can choose to live with paid "foster families" instead of in an institution. "They're awfully nice to me," Marusek said of his foster family, which includes local residents whom Wymer hires to come over and help. "They take care of you like you're gold. They treat you with respect and compassion." Wymer smiled. "You're forgetting the best part," he said. "We're family." "That's right," Marusek said. "I feel like Joe's older brother." The arrangement is organized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, whose nurses and other staff members make regular visits to the foster homes. The veterans directly pay the homeowners for services, including meals, bathing, laundry, medication assistance and transportation to doctors' offices and local stores. Marusek pays \$2,000 a month, which comes from his military pension and Social Security. Fenoglio, who uses a wheelchair and needs more help, pays \$3,000 per month. The idea is new in Iowa, with just four veterans living in three foster homes so far. Nationwide, about 600 veterans have participated in the program since it started in 2000 in Arkansas.



### Golden Retriever Saves 11-Year-Old Boy from cougar

Canada -- A cougar attacked a B.C. family's golden retriever Saturday night after the dog stepped in between the cougar and an 11-year-old boy. Police, who later shot the cougar dead, credited the 18-month-old dog -- Angel -- for saving the boy's life.

Austin Forman had gone to retrieve some firewood outside his family's home in Boston Bar, about 200 kilometres northeast of Vancouver. That's when the cougar began to charge across the yard at the boy. "I was really scared. At first, I didn't know it was a cougar. I thought it was another dog," Austin told CTV News on Sunday. "As soon as it went underneath the light, I saw that it was a cougar. I knew at that moment, I had to go inside." Angel, who had been at Austin's side, engaged the cougar, which was slightly larger than Angel. Austin, meanwhile, ran into the house and screamed, "A cougar is eating Angel!" his mother, Sherri Forman, recalled in a phone interview with [ctvbc.ca](#). Forman said she had to get Austin to repeat himself a few times because he was so shaken. Forman said she looked out the window. She couldn't see anything but could hear Angel whimpering. "To feel so helpless, I knew I couldn't do anything," she said. She called her father-in-law, who told her to call 9-1-1. RCMP Const. Chad Gravelle was nearby and was on scene within a minute. The officer found the cougar under the back porch and heard the dog cry out as the cougar chewed on its neck, police said. The officer fired two rounds into the cougar's rear end, but the cougar continued its attack. The officer closed in to within five feet and shot the cougar again, killing it. ([Video Here](#))



## Death didn't stop this world traveler



In the last 22 months, Ralph B. White's meticulously logged schedule shows trips to the mountains of Nepal, the Australian outback, the China-Mongolia border, a Rwandan volcano, Iceland, Benin and the waters off Zanzibar. Ask White's buddies at the Adventurers' Club of Los Angeles and they'll tell you this itinerary could threaten the health of any other thrill-seeker. But White's stamina is not an issue. He died, at age 66, on Feb. 4, 2008. It's his ashes that have been traveling since then, borne to the ends of the earth and the depths of the sea by his fiancée and fellow Adventurers. Thanks to them, tiny portions of White's remains, carefully measured out in plastic bags, have put in enough posthumous miles to rival King Tut. Instead of a bucket list, he's got an ash log. It's six pages long. "Rather than have people mourn him, he wanted to give people incentive to go have adventures," said Rosaly Lopes, who

was engaged to White when he died and is the keeper of the ashes. Though White covered a lot of the Earth during his life, said Krista Few, his daughter, most of these scatterings have delivered his ashes to new territory. "The competition is what is the most bizarre place we can take Ralph?" To appreciate how well this afterlife suits White, you have to consider the life that came before, friends say. Born in San Bernardino in 1941, White grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii, served in the Marine Corps in Vietnam, founded a parachuting school in Lancaster and worked as a free-fall cameraman for the TV show "Ripcord." As a contract cameraman for National Geographic, he filmed horses, sharks and whales in the wild and searched for the Loch Ness Monster.

**Central Talent Booking**