



HUMAN INTEREST

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Helicopter, 50 Firefighters Deployed to Rescue Dog



LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles Fire Department has defended its decision to deploy about 50 firefighters and a helicopter to rescue a dog from the Los Angeles River. Capt. Steve Ruda said the risk involved with saving the German shepherd from the storm-swollen river on Friday was not as extravagant as it appeared. The department has received praise for the hour-long rescue operation, but has also come under criticism for using so many resources. Mr Ruda said there was no extra cost because the firefighters were on duty and stationed nearby. The German Shepherd,

nicknamed Vernon after the southern California town where it was found, was saved when a firefighter dangling from a helicopter grabbed the dog and held tight as they were taken to an overpass. The dog bit the firefighter, who lost a nail and fractured his thumb. Joe St Georges, 50, said he had no hard feelings toward the dog. "I didn't really have the time to establish any rapport with the dog," Mr St Georges told reporters after being released from County USC medical centre. "He's cold, he's wet, he's scared, and then here's this stranger jumping on his back for all intents and purposes, and he did what dogs do." The animal had no name tag or chip, and police are searching for its owner. [Video](#)

Enid Man's Graduation Postponed 67 Years



ENID, Oklahoma -- Don Becker has a knack for missing stuff. He missed his 1939 graduation from Goltry High School, and he missed his graduation from John Brown University four years later. It's not all Becker's fault though. He contracted the measles shortly before his high school graduation and before commencement in college he had enlisted in the Air Force. "I was in school on Friday and Monday I was on a bus to Ft. Sill," Becker said. And while he was busy with basic training, a friend took his place and his diploma on the graduation stage. It's a fact that has never really bothered Becker. After his military service he worked 40 plus years for Union Equity, the company that

provided him the scholarship to John Brown University. Since his retirement he's stayed busy providing and delivering meals for a local food pantry. Becker thought everyone knew of his graduation tale, but at a recent family gathering his step-daughter became intrigued, and began making plans to get him up on the graduation stage. Her efforts paid off last month when Don Becker, now 89-years-old, led JBU's class of 2009 into the commencement ceremony. He was honored by John Brown Jr. who, in addition to being the university's chancellor, was also a classmate of Becker's. The ceremony was a highlight for the normally low-key Becker, who gave a short speech to the 2009 class, and enjoyed VIP treatment for the weekend. "Actually it was probably better to graduate like I did than it would have been in '43," Becker said. Video [HERE](#)

Drunken Man Tries to Break into Jail



OREGON - A jailbreak usually involves someone trying to bust out of jail, but Medford police arrested a man trying to break into the Jackson County Jail early Monday morning, Medford police Lt. Bob Hansen said. At 4:10 a.m., sheriff's deputies at the jail spotted a man scrambling over a tall fence that surrounds a secure lot where arresting officers unload potential prisoners and escort them inside. Jail officials met the man on the ground and contacted Medford police. The man, James Merrill DeVore, 28, told police that he was distraught over the death of his mother two years ago and admitted that he had been drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. He told officers that he needed

help, so he went to the jail to ask for assistance. When he didn't get an answer at the front entrance, he decided to go around to the back. Medford police charged him with disorderly conduct and trespassing. But even the two criminal charges didn't land DeVore in jail. He was taken to the county's sobering center, referred to the county's mental health program and cited to appear in court later.

Ten Year Old Bonds With Elephants



WINSTON, OR— Wylie Malek has liked elephants for as long as he can remember. His father, Kris Malek, said as soon as his son was able to sit up and watch TV he was fascinated with the giant creatures, whether real ones on the Discovery channel or cartoons on Disney. Wylie, 10, is autistic but has already proven himself to be a hard worker and willing to do the tough jobs — just ask the elephants at Wildlife Safari. When the Maleks discovered they lived just miles away from three elephant residents of the safari park in Winston, they became regulars, stopping in every couple of months since Wylie was 2 years old. Eventually, park officials noticed his passion and enthusiasm for the gentle giants and worked up an arrangement that has benefited the boy and his co-workers for the last two years. "We don't do job shadows on a regular basis," Dinah Wilson, elephant manager, said. "But he has been an inspiration to us." Wylie, a student at Green Elementary School, works with trainers about once a month to do almost every aspect of elephant care. He spreads sawdust, shovels waste and puts out food. When it is time for an elephant bath, Wylie raises a brush

high above his head, spreading soap and bubbles across their thick, gray skin. "Wylie likes to outwork me, I think," elephant keeper Timmy Hamilton said. "We were sweeping hay in the barn and we had a race and he won." The boy constantly has a positive attitude, Hamilton said, and she hasn't found a chore her young helper won't complete.

Big Well Goes Big Time



GREENSBURG, Kan.—Locals here have always been proud of their hole in the ground. It's not just any hole. Residents boast it's the world's largest hand-dug well—and who's to contradict them? Back in 1887, laborers who were paid 50 cents a day used pickaxes, shovels and buckets on pulleys to excavate a perfect circle 32 feet wide and 109 feet deep. Passers-by have been admiring their handiwork ever since. In 2008, a popular vote online tabbed Greensburg's Big Well as one of the Eight Wonders of Kansas, on par with the Underground Salt Museum in Hutchinson (and a cut above the town of West Mineral's star attraction—"Big Brutus," an enormous electric coal shovel). The citizens of Greensburg are planning a \$3 million Big Well museum and this month announced a contract with a high-profile design team, Ralph Appelbaum Associates Inc. of New York. The firm has designed exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., Bill Clinton's presidential library in Little Rock, Ark., and the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. And now they're coming to Greensburg, population just under 1,000, to make the well a star. "It's hard to put words to it," says Steve Hewitt, the town administrator. "It blows my mind."

[Story continues...](#)

Two Bronx men free after 'drugs' turn out to be candy



NYC -- Two Bronx men were locked up and left to rot in a filthy jail cell for nearly a week after a pair of cops mistook their candy for a bag of crack. The "drugs" were finally tested five days later and determined to be popular Coco (coconut) Candy. The charges were dropped. The trouble began the night of Jan. 15, as José Pena, a 48-year-old plumber, and his longtime pal and colleague Cesar Rodriguez, 33, were headed to a party, and decided to stop at a bodega on 181st Street and the Grand Concourse. When they came out, cops were waiting and asked to search their Ford minivan. "I said 'Go search.' I even opened the door," Rodriguez told The Post. Robert Kalfus José Pena, left, and his longtime pal Cesar Rodriguez. An officer rummaged around, came out holding a "Hello Kitty" sandwich bag, and shouted "Bingo!" the men said. "It's only candy!" Rodriguez said, as the cops handcuffed him and Pena, and several other police cars rushed to the scene. Rodriguez said he buys a 50-cent bag of Coco Candy, a hard coconut-based treat, almost every day. Because it easily crumbles, he puts it in a sandwich bag. "Can you test it? Can you taste it?" Rodriguez asked the cops. "Shut up!" they replied. "I didn't know having candy was a crime," he said. The men's lawyer, Neal Wallerstein, said the cops could have realized their mistake quickly. "That's the reason why they have a field-test kit," he said, referring to the NYPD's portable drug identification equipment. But Wallerstein said cops just needed their noses. "It smells like sugar," he said. Instead, the two men were jailed for crack possession. Pena

got out after three days, but Rodriguez was held two more, until Thursday morning. The Bronx District Attorney's office confirmed that the case was dropped after authorities realized there were no drugs. The NYPD had no comment. Rodriguez said he still loves Coco Candy. "It's really sweet," he said. "I could get addicted to this candy."

Central Talent Booking