



Johnstown's hospitals battle for patients

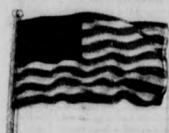
SPECIAL 5-PART SERIES



Alien pleads in Bedford slay

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THURSDAY



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Johnstown, Pennsylvania

State workers stung

Rendell budget freezes salaries

By CHARLES THOMPSON

THE (HARRISBURG) PATRIOT-NEWS

HARRISBURG - They were just five lines in a 12-page speech. But for lots of state government workers, they were the only lines that mattered.

Governor Rendell fired an opening shot in coming contract talks Tuesday by writing a one-year salary freeze for more than 60,000 state workers into his 2003-04 budget. Contracts for those workers expire June 30.

"We simply do not have the money to fund pay raises, particularly at a time when we are asking so many to sacrifice so much," Rendell said in unveiling a budget highlighted by deep cuts in many areas to offset a projected \$2.4 billion deficit in the \$21 billion plan.

Rendell also promised to re-examine employee benefits to find more savings, and yesterday added he can't guarantee no layoffs in a plan designed to eliminate nearly 2,000 state jobs.

Those were the words reverberating around Harrisburg yesterday, very much a company town with more than 20,000 state employees based in the area.

"I've heard people talking about it at my office," said Judy Dozlar, a 46-year-old state Civil Service Commission employee interviewed during lunch at Strawberry Square.

And the general reaction? "Not happy," Dozlar said. "They're no happier than me."

Disappointment was widespread. But beyond that, Rendell's wage-

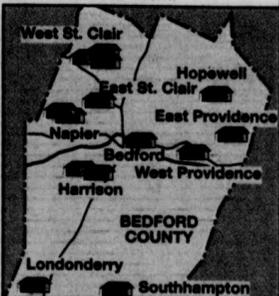
A lot to look out for

The covered bridges of Bedford County — eight county owned, six privately owned — were built between 1872 and 1902. The county's covered bridge society is being reactivated to look after them.

Bridge locations:



The Ryot Covered Bridge was heavily damaged by fire in August.



CATHERINE HRBAL/TH. TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Saving spans

Bedford covered bridge group revived

By KATHY MELLOTT

TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT BEDFORD BUREAU

EVERETT - The Bedford County Covered Bridge Society, inactive for a decade, is re-forming to save the spans dating to the 19th century.

A handful of the society's remaining members met at Everett Free Library on Main Street yesterday, the first in a series of monthly meetings and a renewed effort to keep the bridges intact.

"Almost all of the tourists come to see our covered bridges," said bridge aficionado Richard Claycomb of Osterburg. "They are tremendously impressed and it doesn't matter if the bridges are private or publicly owned, people don't care."

Claycomb conducts bus tours taking visitors around the county on behalf of Bedford County Tourist Promotion Agency and area companies.

He estimates he does between 50 and 90 tours annually, all of which include the 14 covered bridges that remain.

Bedford County at one time had two dozen covered bridges, a figure that has dropped because of neglect and fires.

Washington County has the most covered bridges in the state with 23, said Dennis Tice, executive director of Bedford County Tourist Promotion Agency, in an interview at his office, 141 S. Juliana St., Bedford.

Please see SPANS, A4

Accused official is out

Development board booting theft suspect

By KIRK SWAUGER

THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

A Johnstown Redevelopment Authority member — who court records indicate embezzled money to keep her now-closed neighborhood grocery afloat — will be kicked off that board.

Allegra Rastall, a former mayoral candidate and owner of Bifano's Groceria, is suspected of diverting some of the money swiped from the bank accounts of a 91-year-old woman to the store.

The grocery at 411 Daniel St. near Oakhurst Homes was locked yesterday, and its shelves were empty. A

Billy Boy ice cream truck was parked outside, and a business card from a local dairy company was taped to the front door.

Neighbors said the store has been closed about six weeks after its license to sell beer was not renewed.

City officials said they intend to remove Rastall, whose term has expired on the redevelopment authority, from the board on Wednesday.

Rastall, 36, is suspected of embezzling more than \$150,000 from the older woman for whom she



Rastall

Please see OUT, A4



JOHN RUCOSKY/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Allegra Rastall owned Bifano's Groceria, which has been closed for about six weeks.

Feds eyeing local office for Flight 93 monument

By MIKE FANER

TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT SOMERSET BUREAU

SOMERSET - The National Park Service is establishing an office here to coordinate years of planning for a Flight 93 memorial.

In yet another sign of a concrete commitment to a memorial, the office will be a headquarters for the federal government's efforts to create a new national park in Stonycreek Township.

The park, with still-unknown boundaries and features, will honor the 40 innocent victims of the hijacked jetliner that crashed Sept. 11, 2001.

It's not yet clear where the park service's office space

will be located, but one administrator said she hopes to have the facility running by mid-summer.

"It's going to be a planning office," said Joanne Hanley, the park service's lead coordinator for the 9-11 memorial, in a telephone interview. "My base of operations will be in Somerset."

Hanley now is based at Fort Necessity in Fayette County and serves as executive director of Western Pennsylvania's national parks.

But she estimates that she's already spending at least 80 percent of her time on Flight 93 matters — a number

Please see FEDS, A4



TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

Joanne Hanley of National Park Service, inset, is coordinating plans for the Flight 93 site, above.



INSIDE

PITT PEAKING

With tournament time nearing, the University of Pittsburgh is heating up. The seventh-ranked Panthers opened up a big early lead and got 16 points from Julius Page to end Seton Hall's nine-game winning streak. **B1.**

CRUSHERS CRUISE

The Bishop McCort High School hockey team opened a first-period lead and held off Forest Hills in a Class A Penguin Cup game. **B1.**

WEATHER

Colder with snow, perhaps 3 to 6 inches. High 29. Low 11. **DS.**

- AbbyD3
- BirthsD8
- BridgeD5
- Business ...C1
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Teachers, board fail to close gap on pact

By MATTHEW EPSTEIN

TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT EDUCATION WRITER

SOMERSET - The 39-month Somerset Area School District contract dispute will get no closer to settlement under a proposal submitted by teachers yesterday.

Their union, Somerset Area Education Association, offered almost exactly the same deal it has had on the table for a year.

Tuesday, the school board submit-

ted a new offer that was less generous than its previous proposal.

Both sides had to submit the offers for a 10-day public comment period prior to non-binding arbitration.

"We just clarified a couple of issues," SAEA President Jon Critchfield said in a telephone interview about language changes in the union proposal.

Please see PACT, A4

Two Iraqi diplomats ordered out of U.S.

By EDITH M. LEDERER

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS - The United States has ordered two Iraqi diplomats to leave the country for engaging in activities outside their diplomatic status — a usual reference to spying, U.S. and Iraqi officials said yesterday.

Iraq's U.N. Ambassador Mohammed Al-Douri said the men were informed of the expulsion order at 6 p.m. Tuesday and given 72 hours to leave the United States.

The U.S. State Department also announced the expulsions

Please see DIPLOMATS, A4

ASHES FOR THE FAITHFUL



On Ash Wednesday at St. John Gualbert Roman Catholic Church in Johnstown, the Rev. John F. Brezovec, above, applies ashes to parishioners' foreheads, including Johnstown insurance executive Robert Gleason, left.

TODD SHREVEY/ THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Funeral director dies at 83

By FRANK SOJAK

THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Pauline Gordon of Johnstown, a beloved funeral director who served many families during her 56 years in the profession, died Tuesday at the Presbyterian Home in Upper Yoder Township.

Miss Gordon, who wore flamboyant hats and was one of the best-known black business owners in the city, was 83.

"The community has lost a very professional, dynamic, community-oriented person," said a longtime friend, Verna Carter of Johnstown.

Miss Gordon's funeral home, the Pauline H.L. Gordon Mortuary, 662 Main St., had been in operation since 1946. In July, the funeral home was honored by the NAACP as Johns-

Miss Gordon

Please see DIRECTOR, A4