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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

The Panama Canal

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA – Former President Jimmy Carter, who agreed 22 years ago to hand over the Panama Canal to Panama, represented the United States at the symbolic turnover of the waterway. Panama officially takes control of the canal on December 31. Although he didn't attend the ceremony, President Clinton expressed a "continuing commitment" to the canal's security. The handover of the canal will end a relationship between Panama and the United States that dates to Panama's birth as an independent country in 1903, when it broke away from Colombia. The U.S. government then took over the canal project. It was finished in 1914.

Judges nix New York transit strike

Judges granted two temporary restraining orders blocking New York City transit workers from going on strike just after midnight. City officials said the restraining orders would facilitate enforcement of a state law that bars strikes by public employees. Meanwhile, transit officials and union leaders say they are making progress in trying to prevent a strike that would disrupt subway and bus service for some 3.5 million New Yorkers.

Nazi labor fund

BERLIN – U.S. and German negotiators have agreed to establish a fund of \$5.2 billion for Nazi-era slave and forced laborers, a German lawyer representing the victims. The German government raised its offer to \$2.6 billion, equaling the amount already pledged by German industry to compensate those forced to work for Hitler's war machine. In addition to the Nazi labor compensation, the fund will also include money from separate negotiations over unpaid insurance claims from World War II.

Traditional stores back web taxes

SAN FRANCISCO – An advisory panel begins a two-day session to examine proposals on whether consumers should pay sales taxes on Internet purchases. The Clinton administration opposes an outright ban on Internet sales taxes but says it is too soon to begin imposing a new tax system. A group called E-Fairness Coalition, which includes major national chains such as Wal-Mart and Radio Shack, says the government has a "duty" to collect taxes from online shoppers. Sales taxes are the single largest source of revenue for most states and local governments, amounting to \$147 billion in 1997.

U.S. Trade Deficit hit record high

WASHINGTON – America's trade deficit set a record for the third consecutive quarter, widening to \$89.95 billion in the July-September period, the Commerce Department reported. The deficit in the current account rose by 11.2 percent in the third quarter this year, up from \$80.9 billion in the second quarter. Through the first nine months of this year, the current account deficit is running at an annual rate of \$319 billion, 45 percent higher than last year's \$220 billion imbalance.

Portland youths fly to North Pole to visit Santa

Every year, Santa shimmies down chimneys in Portland. But this year, a group of area youths didn't wait for Santa to make his annual trek from the North Pole. Instead, about 100 children climbed aboard a United Airlines 757 recently and headed to the North Pole.

Really. The trip to the North Pole was part of United Airlines Fifth Annual Fantasy Flight program during the Christmas season. Each year, children from Oregon Special Olympics, Make-A-Wish, Oregon Services to Children and Families and Washington's Division of Children and Family Services are selected to take the hour long trip to the North Pole. Each child was paired with a volunteer, who was a retired United Airlines employee such as Herman Hoek. "We love to help these kids. It's great to see their faces," said Hoek, who retired from United Airlines 20 years ago after working there for 33 years. "It's rewarding to see the kids be so appreciative. Christmas is for kids and it's about the spirit of giving. We are here to give."

As the children waited at Portland International Airport's Gate E1 for their flight, they played Go-Fish, had their faces painted and made friends with Rusty the Clown as



Justin Griffin, 8, Jonathon Griffen, 6 and Shane Dillingham, 6, socialize with Fred Bear and Super Weevil as they wait to board a plane to the North Pole.

well as popular store mascots Red Robin, Toys-R-Us Geoffrey the Giraffe, Fred Meyer's Fred Bear and Kaiser Permanente's Super Weevil.

All playing, talking, giggling and running, ceased when the children heard over the

intercom system, "Boarding Flight 9128 to the North Pole." All the children got in line. The mascots did, too. Geoffrey the Giraffe, however could not go on the flight because he is too tall.

The plane's crew, wearing antler ears and Rudolph red noses, greeted the children and buckled them in their seats. Once they watched the plane's safety video ... at the request of Santa, they were on their way. As the plane took off into the clear night sky, 100 children shrieked and shouted, "Hellllllloooooo Santaaaaaaa!" Once it was safe to move about the plane, Cpt. Roger Parsons, who was the pilot, pointed out Santa's workshop, which looked a lot like Timberline Lodge. He also invited the children into the cockpit. Brothers Jonathan and Justin of Washington were among the first to visit the pilot. "This is the best thing in the world," Justin said as he peeked out the window. Officer Larry Stone listened to the children and began to smile. "It's just incredible," he said. "All of their joy. It's amazing..." As the hourlong plane ride continued, Parsons announced that a strange object had been sighted. A sleigh and nine reindeer.

(Please see 'Santa' page 2)

Former L.A. cop will lead Portland police

Mark Kroeker, 55, beats out other candidates in his bid to be Portland's police chief

CONTRIBUTORIAL STORY FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mayor Vera Katz announced Monday that Mark Kroeker, a 32-year Los Angeles police veteran, will become the city's new police chief at the start of the new year. The selection was finalized Wednesday after Katz consulted with city commissioners about raising the chief's salary to \$130,000. Former Chief Charles Moose, who resigned in July to become chief in Montgomery County, Md., left at the top chief's pay of \$106,163. In

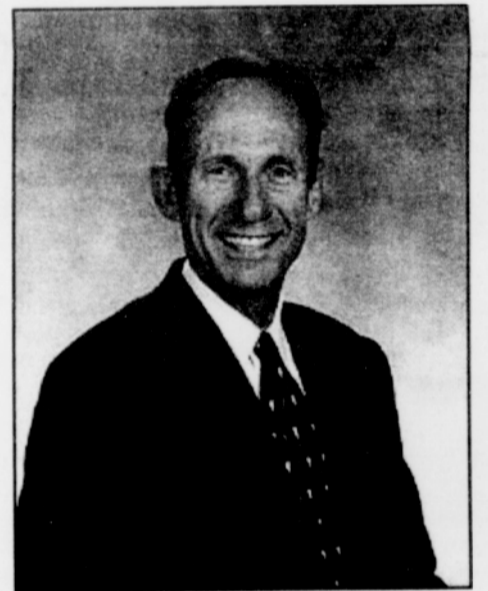
the national search for his successor, Katz made the chief's salary negotiable. Kroeker, 55, becomes the first chief to be tapped from outside the Portland police ranks in 25 years. Although observers agree that the selection carries important implications for the Police Bureau's future, it also marks a political test for Katz, who is up for re-election in 2000.

Katz announced the appointment at a news conference Monday at the Justice Center. The mayor's staff was making arrangements for Kroeker, who was in Los Angeles on Wednesday night, to attend. The naming of a new chief comes two months after the city hired Shannon Associates, a California-based firm, to conduct a nationwide search along with the Police Executive Research Forum, based in Washington, D.C. A 19-member citizens' selection committee appointed by Katz whittled a field of 37

candidates down to eight semifinalists and recommended their top choices to the mayor after interviews last month. Kroeker and Ronald C. Monroe, a 20-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department in the District of Columbia, were the two finalists.

Monroe, who became an assistant chief in 1998, said Katz phoned him about 3 p.m. PST Wednesday. "She told me she just felt the bureau would be better handled by Chief Kroeker, and I thanked her for the opportunity to be considered," Monroe said.

"Mark has a few more years of experience than I do. I congratulate him. He's a well-qualified professional." Kroeker, a native of Dallas, Ore. who grew up in Africa, France and California as the son of missionary parents, retired in 1997 as one of Los Angeles' most well-respected and popular deputy chiefs.



Mark Kroeker

King trial verdict predictable



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The jury that found a widespread government conspiracy responsible for the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had little choice but to reach such a verdict.

During the four-week civil trial, which ended Wednesday, jurors heard no evidence to the contrary, even from the lawyer representing the man who King's family named in its wrongful death lawsuit.

"If both sides present to the jury basically the same facts, then what is that jury supposed to do? The jury is going to come back with a verdict that's supported by those positions," said John Campbell, a state prosecutor who has investigated King's murder but was not involved in the trial.

King biographer David J. Garrow told The Commercial Appeal of Memphis the trial "has made the Tennessee state judiciary look like a laughingstock." He said the verdict will

have "zero" impact on history. And the day after the verdict, the Justice Department said its own 16-month investigation is not likely to produce new criminal charges in the assassination despite the latest trial.

The King family filed the suit against Loyd Jowers, a retired Memphis businessman who claimed on national television six years ago that he paid someone other than James Earl Ray to kill King in Memphis in 1968. Jowers claimed he became involved at the behest of a friend who was working for a Mafia boss in New Orleans.

Ray confessed to the killing in 1969 but recanted and spent the rest of his life trying to prove his innocence. He died in prison last year.

A U.S. House committee concluded in 1978 that Ray killed King but may have had help from a small group of racists before or after the murder. The committee found no government involvement.

The jury found Jowers was liable in King's death and that unnamed others, including government agencies, were involved. It awarded the King family \$100 - the token amount requested in the suit.

After issuing the verdict, one juror said it was a "cut-and-dried" case.

And the King family said the verdict justified its belief that a conspiracy was at the heart of the assassination.

"We know what happened. This is the period at the end of the sentence," said Dexter King, one of the Rev. King's four children.

"So please, after today, we don't want questions like 'Do you believe James Earl Ray killed your father?' I've been hearing that all

my life. No, I don't, and this is the end of it." Campbell said the verdict does not change prosecutors' belief that Ray was the killer and

that if any conspiracy did exist it was a small-scale one involving only a few people close to him.

King murder probe said incomplete

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The congressional committee that investigated Martin Luther King Jr.'s death in the 1970s failed to dig deep enough into allegations of a murder conspiracy, a committee member says.

Walter Fauntroy, a former congressman from the District of Columbia, gave that assessment Monday at the trial of a wrongful death lawsuit filed by the King family.

"We didn't have the time to investigate leads we had established but could not follow," Fauntroy said.

The Kings are suing Loyd Jowers, a former Memphis businessman who told ABC in 1993 that he played a part in the assassination.

The suit seeks unspecified damages from Jowers and "other unknown co-conspirators," but what the Kings are really after is having a trial jury hear allegations of a murder conspiracy.

The U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in 1978 that James Earl Ray shot King. Ray confessed to the murder in 1969 but then spent the next three decades trying to take it back. He died last year in prison.

His confession was upheld eight times by state and federal courts.

Jowers had said in 1993 that he hired King's killer, as a favor to a friend with underworld ties, and it wasn't Ray.

The House committee also said Ray may have had help from others before or after the murder, but Fauntroy said the committee did not investigate allegations of a widespread conspiracy.

"We asked the Justice Department to follow up ... and to see if there was more than just a low-level conspiracy," Fauntroy said after his testimony.

He said the committee was unaware of the extent of the FBI's efforts to spy on King and discredit him. The committee also was unaware of allegations that U.S. Army agents had King under surveillance at the time of his death, Fauntroy said.

The House committee concluded that Ray may have hoped to cash in on a \$50,000 bounty on King allegedly offered by a small group of racial bigots in St. Louis.

But Fauntroy said he remains unsure how the murder was carried out. "I'm hopeful as truth rises we'll get a better picture," he said. The trial is expected to wrap up by the end of the week.