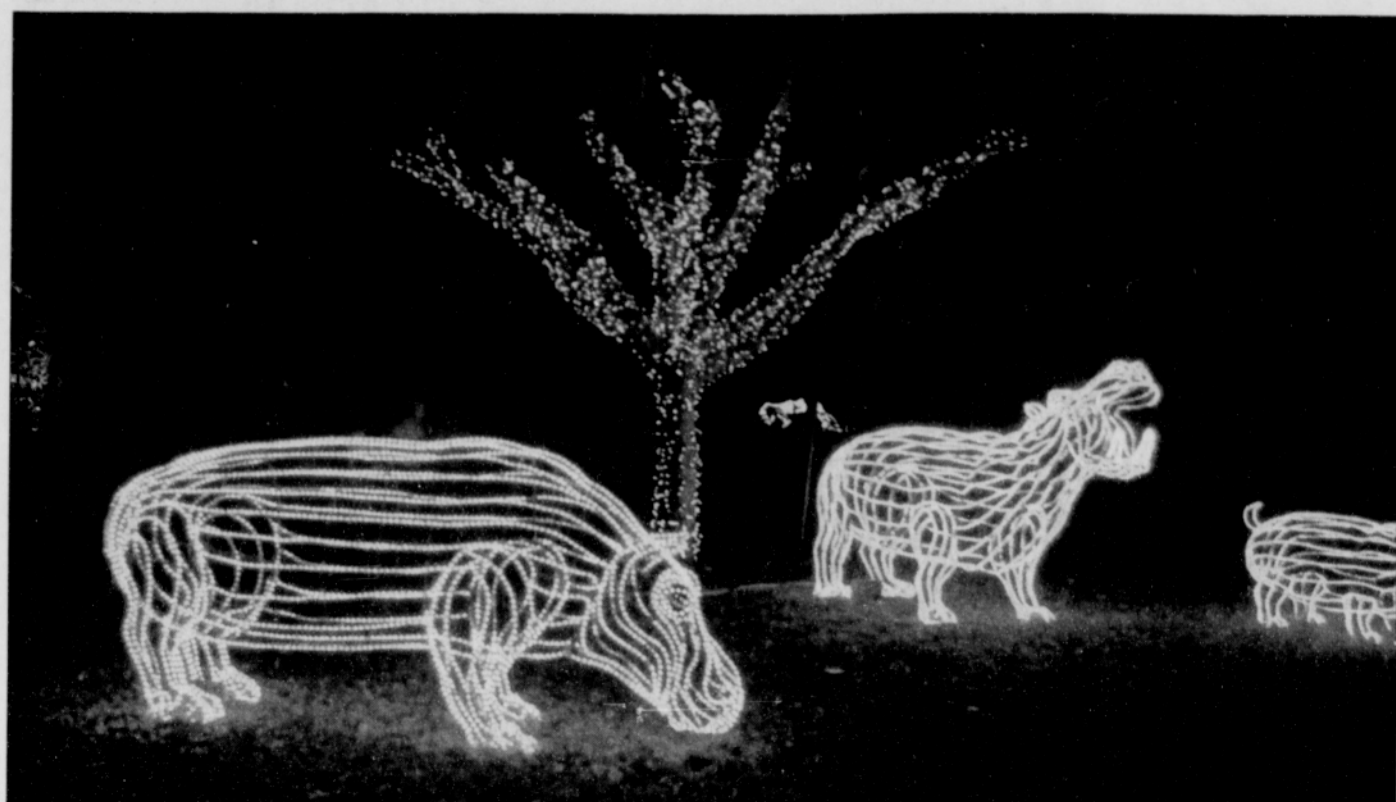


Focus



HIPPOS ILLUMINATED

There's still time left to see 500,000 lights spark up animated hippos, crocodiles, condors and more at the Oregon Zoo's holiday Zoolights. The lights will turn on during four final nights this week from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Lawyer says Vendetta Behind Jackson Charges

Prosecutor appears to have several hurdles to climb



Michael Jackson

(AP)—Michael Jackson, facing charges that could send him to prison for years, is the victim of a vendetta and is ready to fight to prove his innocence, his attorney said after the pop music star was charged with performing lewd acts on a child.

District Attorney Thomas Sneddon, who tried to bring a similar case against Jackson 10 years ago, filed seven counts of molesting a child under the age of 14 against Jackson on Thursday. The entertainer also was charged with two counts of plying the boy with "an intoxicating agent" to make it easier to carry out the assaults.

Filing the charges was a victory for Sneddon, who failed to build a

case against Jackson in 1993 when a boy who made similar allegations refused to cooperate with authorities after reportedly receiving a multimillion-dollar settlement from the pop star.

This time, Sneddon says, he has a cooperative witness who isn't interested in a piece of Jackson's fortune.

The entertainer's attorney, Mark Geragos, denounced the allegations as driven by money and vengeance, and said Jackson, who is free on \$3 million bail, look forward to resolving the matter in court.

"Anybody else who knows anything about the history of these accusers, anybody who knows anything about the history of the investigators and the axes they have to grind know that these charges are not only categorically untrue, but they're driven, driven by two things: money and revenge. And we will prove that," Geragos said.

Sneddon appears to have several hurdles to overcome to win a conviction.

Persuading a jury to accept the timeline of the alleged crimes is one of the key ones.

Five of the counts state that Jackson molested the boy, a cancer victim the entertainer befriended, sometime between the approximate dates of Feb. 7 and March 10. The other two counts, and the charges

of giving the boy an intoxicant, state that those crimes allegedly occurred between the approximate dates of Feb. 20 and March 10.

That means Jackson would have begun molesting the boy amid the swift and fervent criticism he received after the Feb. 6 airing of a documentary in which he told of letting children sleep in his bedroom and sometimes in his bed when they visited his Neverland Ranch in Santa Barbara County.

Los Angeles County child welfare officers began investigating Jackson's relationship with the child on Feb. 14, prompted by a complaint to a county hot line from a school administrator who saw the show.

The investigation, which ended Feb. 27, found there was no basis for molestation allegations after the boy, his mother and his siblings denied them.

Russell Halpern, an attorney for the father, has said the boy's mother had a "Svengali-like ability" to make her children lie in testimony.

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Tet Celebration

What a View!

Take in the Portland lights from the Sternwheeler for Christmas through Dec. 28. Admission ranges from \$20 to \$65 for dinner, dancing and holiday brunches. For more information, visit www.sternwheeler.com or call 800-643-1354.

The Vietnamese community celebrates the year of the monkey with a traditional festival Tet and Lion Dance on Saturday, Jan. 17 at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. MLK Blvd. Festivities, games and music are from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. with a fundraising dance at 8 p.m. for a cost of \$25. For more information, call 503-780-0842.

Santa's Late

Find Santa at the Oregon Zoo's holiday simulator ride for the holidays through Dec. 28. Call 503-226-1561 or visit www.oregonzoo.org for more information.

Ozzie's Birthday

Join Oregon Zoo staff for a third birthday party on Jan. 2 for Ozzie, the famous otter, who was conceived, born and raised by his mother in captivity. Birthday party guests receive cupcakes. For more information, call 503-226-1561 or visit www.oregonzoo.org.

Jazzy Family

Chris Brown, son of local jazz legend Mel Brown, performs at the Blue Monk, 3314 SE Belmont, at 8 p.m. Tuesdays, Dec. 23.

Sax Flies West

Charles Gayle, a New York jazz saxophone street performer, will have a rare West Coast performance at Disjecta, 116 N.E. Russell St., on Jan. 10. Free.

Communal Art

Talisman Gallery features a group show of all of its members with diverse style, content and media from Jan. 2-25 with an opening at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 2. For more information, visit www.talismangallery.com.

Arts Benefit

The Talisman Gallery presents "Foot Square," benefiting Habitat For Humanity, through Dec. 28. For more information, call 503-287-9529.

Nationals Emergency

The Harlem Globetrotters will play the New York Nationals at the Rose Garden Arena at 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24. Tickets start at \$11 and can be purchased at the Rose Garden box office or by calling 503-227-4400.

Kwanzaa Gala

Bridge Builders is holding its seventh annual Kwanzaa Gala and Initiates Ball at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 27 at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets are \$30. For more information, call 503-306-2960.

No Sissies!

Bump In the Road Theatre presents "(Old Age Ain't) No Place For Sissies" from Jan. 23 through Feb. 7 at the Fine Arts Building at Concordia University, Northeast 27th Avenue and Highland. A "pay what you will" performance is at 8 p.m. Jan. 22. Other performances are at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets range between \$10 and \$12. For reservations, call 503-750-1439.

All New Christmas Carol

The Northwest Children's Theater and School presents the "All New Christmas Carol" at the Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center, 1819 N.W. Everett St., through Dec. 24. Tickets are \$20 for adults. For showtimes and more information, call 503-222-4480 or visit www.nwcts.org.

Vroom!

The Portland International Auto Show is from Feb. 5 through 8 for domestic and imports, concept and economy cars, at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. MLK Blvd. General admission is \$8. For more information, call 800-322-4821.

Trippin' through Town

Take a trip through time to find the hottest poetry, hip-hop and soul influencing Portland Wednesdays at the Ohm. \$7 cover. 31 N.W. First Ave.

Stack 'Em Up

Adult Lego enthusiasts will love the 2004 BrickFest Expo at the Oregon Convention Center. The exhibit will have themed displays and mosaics from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Feb. 15 for an admission of \$5 per person or \$20 max per family. For more information, call 503-297-5090.

Wild Party

Excite your child with a birthday party in the woods, meadow or near a pond, hosted by Portland Parks and Recreation staff. Themes include forest fairies, Indian legends, Lewis and Clark exploration, animal tracking, camouflage critters and more. Parties begin at \$100 for 10 children, including games, activities and favors. For more information, call 503-823-3601.

Magic Fingers

One of the preeminent electric bassists of our time, Grammy award-winning Victor Wooten, includes Portland as a stop on his rare solo tour next month.

As the bassist of the world-acclaimed roots-fusion quartet Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Wooten has stretched the boundaries of his instrument, bringing it to new levels of virtuosity in the styles of hard-edged funk, jazz, R&B and rock.

Wooten will perform a smoldering show in Portland at the Aladdin Theater on Feb. 7.



Dance beat surgeon Victor Wooten performs with his magical electric bass.

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