

Week in
The ReviewBush Nominee Backed
Anti-Abortion Movement

Supreme Court nominee Harriet Miers pledged support in 1989 for a constitutional amendment banning abortions except when necessary to save the life of the mother, according to material given to the Senate on Tuesday. As a candidate for the Dallas City Council, she also supported legislation restricting abortions if the Supreme Court ruled that states could ban abortions.

Saddam Lawyer Seeks Delay

The lawyer for Saddam Hussein said Tuesday he will ask a tribunal for a three-month adjournment of the former Iraqi dictator's trial for a 1982 massacre. Saddam and seven senior members of his 23-year regime go on trial Wednesday to face charges they ordered the killings of nearly 150 people from the mainly Shiite town of Dujail following a failed attempt on Saddam's life.



Hurricane Threatens Florida

Tropical Storm Wilma strengthened into a hurricane Tuesday on a path that could threaten storm-battered Florida, tying the record for the most hurricanes to form in an Atlantic season. Long-range forecasts show Wilma could hit western Cuba or Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula before heading into the Gulf of Mexico by Friday.

Frontier Opens for Quake Aid

Pakistan on Tuesday proposed allowing Kashmiris to cross the frontier dividing the territory with India to help earthquake victims - the latest sign of cooperation between the nuclear rivals since this month's disaster. But the U.N. World Food Program warned that 500,000 earthquake survivors have yet to receive supplies.

Lottery Up to \$340 Million

The lottery Powerball has climbed to a \$340 million jackpot, making it the second-biggest jackpot in U.S. history. Wednesday's Powerball climbed into the stratosphere after 20 straight drawings in which no one won the grand prize. The odds of hitting all six numbers are 1 in 146 million.

Obesity Surgery Very Risky

The chances of dying within a year after obesity surgery are much higher than previously thought, even among people in their 30s and 40s, a study of more than 16,000 Medicare patients found. Among 35- to 44-year-olds in the Medicare study, more than 5 percent of men and nearly 3 percent of women were dead within a year, and slightly higher rates were seen in patients 45 to 54.

TV Networks Take Asia Bell Case

Heartbroken
family asks
witnesses to
speak up

BY KATHERINE BLACKMORE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

After nearly three years, the mystery of who killed 23-year-old Asia Bell-James is finally attracting some national attention, both on America's Most Wanted and the Maury Povich Show.

Through these appearances, the victim's family hopes to find justice to the well-known but unsolved murder that continues to shake the north and northeast Portland community.

On Nov. 20, 2002 in the early evening, Asia was standing on the porch of her home on North Mississippi Avenue and Jessup Street, when an unknown suspect fired numerous shots in her direction.

Asia was killed, her husband Tyrone James was blinded and Robert Milhouse, a friend, was wounded. Police still haven't found any suspects.

Three years later, Tyrone says he doesn't feel fully alive.

"I don't understand why they did it," he said. "We've never been in any gangs, we never did drugs."

On the day his wife was shot and his vision was taken from him, Tyrone was celebrating his 26th birthday with some time off of work. He was employed by Oregon Health and Sciences University as a building maintenance engineer, and Asia was working in business accounts with Legacy Health Systems at Good Samaritan.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Members of the Bell and James family, including the four children (far right) of murder victim Asia Bell-James, rally support for the investigation into the unsolved killing that continues to shake the north and northeast Portland community.

The young couple had just started to become comfortable with life, taking care of five beautiful children.

"It affected my whole family. I don't have a wife, my kids don't have a mother... it affected us all," James said. "The kids get emotional sometimes. They've been doing well in school, but they miss their mother a lot."

The family has no idea who could've carried out such a senseless act of violence or what motives they may have had.

They're hoping that with more television exposure, someone in the community will step forward with information.

Tyrone also seeks to get the message across "to sit and think before you do something. It's not just tearing up one person, it's tearing up a family. I love (Asia) a lot. If anybody knows anything, say something."

Deronia James, Tyrone's aunt, is the behind-the-scenes catalyst who helped place the family's case on the aforementioned TV shows.

Deronia's motivation began when Tyrone asked her to do anything she could to help him regain his vision. So she wrote letter after letter, email after email, to as many television shows and organizations she could think of. At one point, 500 envelopes were sent to various facilities, asking for medical assistance to fix Tyrone's eyesight.

"It's an issue of making an effort," Deronia said. "People need to get on board. Hard work pays off eventually - it just took a lot of letters and writing."

Simultaneously, Asia's mother, Perlia Bell, was (and still is) leading a community anti-violence campaign.

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Economic Justice for School Custodians

Wholesale firings
ruled illegal

BY MICHAEL LEIGHTON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland school custodians who lost their jobs in an illegal firing three years ago may win back wages and their jobs back.

The Portland School District is still evaluating the impact from an Oregon Supreme Court ruling that invalidated the replacement of 300 custodians with lower cost workers by subcontracting janitorial

services to a private contractor. It may ask the court to reconsider Thursday's decision, but it cannot be appealed.

The high court found that the firings were illegal because of a state law requiring the custodians to be school district employees. A 4-3 majority on the court cited a 1937 Oregon law that defined custodians and assistant custodians in large school districts as essential services.

Justice Paul De Muniz said the law was intended to make sure people hired in the schools presented no danger to school children and were approved by a Civil Service Board.

Portland School District officials were

devastated by the potential cost of the court decision. The local school system, already racked by budget cuts, a lack of support from the State Legislature, and school closings, says it has saved \$10 million in the past two years due to the contracted services.

The ruling was praised by the Service Employees International Union, which represented the custodians and contested the school district's move.

"We look forward to seeing our members get their jobs back. And we hope that this decision will make other employers think twice before they try to save a quick buck by outsourcing crucial services that Oregonians need and deserve," said Leslie Frane,

executive director of SEIU Local 503.

Many of the custodians were long-time employees who were also responsible for a building's physical plant including its furnace and air conditioning. Many were African Americans supporting families and local households.

School district officials said they made the decision to replace the workers in 2002 because they were faced with a severe financial shortfall.

"It is disturbing to consider spending more of our scarce dollars on custodial services, rather than on educating our kids," said Cathy Minberg, the school district's chief operating officer.



PHOTO BY KATHERINE BLACKMORE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
A headstone dating back to the late 1800s was knocked over by vandals last weekend at the Lone Fir Cemetery in southeast Portland. Many other surrounding monuments were also affected.

Historic Cemetery
Victim to VandalsHeadstones knocked over,
paint poured on grass

BY KATHERINE BLACKMORE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's painful for Susie Bousha, manager of the Lone Fir Cemetery in southeast Portland, to find vandalism as she walks through the monumental park's beautiful grounds filled with grass, flowers, trees and their respective squirrels.

"I'm very territorial. To have people blatantly disregard the historical significance of this place is just heartwrenching," Bousha said.

Multiple headstones, some dating back to the late 1800s, were damaged recently by

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someone with nothing better to do. It appeared that the suspect started from one direction and tried to see how many tall, column-shaped markers they could knock over.

On Oct. 8, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., other people had poured paint on the grass, apparently to mark off an area in which they were filming or taking photos. This resulted in damaged turf surrounding

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