

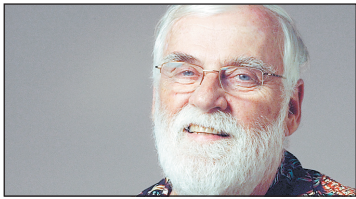
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IMAM SET FREE

Former Austin resident Safdar Razi released from detention center, must leave the United States ■ B3

NO INDICTMENT

Williamson County grand jury does not charge Round Rock police officers who fatally shot a man ■ B5



JOHN KELSO

Make mansion fit into downtown: Convert it to lofts

So what to do about the tragic destruction of the treasured 1856-vintage Governor's Mansion that was ravaged by an early morning fire Sunday? Why not turn the joint into lofts with a penthouse for the governor and his family? Or how about something of the mixed-use sort, with affordable housing and iconic businesses?

Think about it. If it had been a privately owned and operated condo building instead of the Governor's Mansion, we probably wouldn't have had this fire problem because the property would have had tighter security. The word now is that only one state trooper was on duty at the time of the fire and that at least two security cameras weren't working.

That's pathetic. A condo would spring for a couple of guys in doorman outfits, some electronic equipment that actually ran, and perhaps a biting dog.

Also, there's the design factor. Any student of feng shui would quickly point out that the stodgy old cotton plantation-lookin' building near the Capitol just doesn't mesh with the city's new lofty design. Not that I like the new downtown look. But we're stuck with this towering mediocrity, right? And with those huge white (now charcoal and white) columns out front, the Governor's Mansion looks like the Old South. Hey, it ain't like this is downtown Georgia, so why do we have this Tara look-alike in the middle of town? What this city doesn't need is a place to play the banjo.

I don't mean to sound like Frank Lloyd Wright, but the Governor's Mansion clashes with the condo towers that have sprouted up around the city like so many grub worm-produced dead spots on a cookie-cutter suburban home lawn.

Besides, an automatic condo market is stooging around in expensive suits right next door. Conveniently located within shuffling distance of the Capitol, the condos would be snapped up by wealthy lobbyists soon enough. As it stands now, the area around the Capitol is severely underlofted, compared with the Warehouse District.

Another compelling reason to turn the mansion into lofts? It would eliminate the need to ask the public for donations to fund a multimillion-dollar renovation because private enterprise would foot the bill.

Yet another factor: While Austinites profess a love for the Governor's Mansion because of the Lone Star State history angle, they don't feel the passion they would for, say, an ancient tree. When the beloved Treaty Oak on Baylor Street was poisoned by some creep back in 1989, children placed wreaths at the base of the tree, and hippies left sappy poetry to help the tree get better. About all that's been placed at the Governor's Mansion is a bunch of yellow crime scene tape and a truck from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

John Kelso's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Contact him at 445-3606 or jkelso@statesman.com.

HAYS COUNTY

Mojica Carmona's wife gets 30 years in child abuse case

By Andrea Lorenz  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

SAN MARCOS — Sara Amaya, whose husband, Cesar Mojica Carmona, was convicted in April on 14 counts of injury to a child for biting and beating their three children, pleaded guilty Thursday to 14 counts of felony child abuse.

Amaya, 23, was sentenced to 30 years in prison on each count; the terms will be served concurrently.

Amaya's attorney Leslie Halasz did not return a call for comment Thursday afternoon.

Hays County District Attorney Sherri Tibbe said evidence showed that Amaya did not perpetrate the abuse on the couple's 4-year-old daughter and 3-year-old twins.

But she had a legal duty to protect them, Tibbe said.

See ABUSE, B6



Sara Amaya  
Husband was accused of biting 3 kids.

TEXAS YOUTH COMMISSION

ACLU: Girls in lockup abused

Lawsuit criticizes Brownwood facility's use of force, solitary confinement and strip searches

By Mike Ward  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

A year after a sex abuse scandal triggered a top-to-bottom management makeover at the Texas Youth Commission, a civil rights group sued the agency Thursday, saying that teenage girls have been abused at a Central Texas lockup.

In a lawsuit filed in federal court in Austin,

the American Civil Liberties Union and ACLU of Texas said five incarcerated girls — "all of whom have histories of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse" — were abused in the Brownwood State School with "unwarranted solitary confinement, routine strip searches and brutal physical force."

"Throwing children into cold, bare solitary confinement cells is profoundly damaging, especially to children who previously have been abused," Mie Lewis, a staff attorney with the ACLU Women's Rights Project, said in a statement. "TYC's reliance on solitary confinement has to stop."

The lawsuit states that the mistreatment violates the U.S. Constitution and international

standards protecting children from abuse and "prohibiting torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Jim Hurley, a spokesman for the Youth Commission, denied the allegations. He said the agency is making strides to improve conditions.

Hurley said the ACLU had not notified the agency about possible problems before it filed the lawsuit.

"We would rather do this as partners rather than across the table" in court, he said.

Terry Burke, executive director of the ACLU

See SUIT, B2

AUSTIN ■ REPUBLIC OF TEXAS BIKER RALLY

Biggest party on two wheels back in town



Alberto Martínez AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Loren 'Freakshow' Foley, 24, left, and Rene 'Reckless One' Regimball, 41, performed in the Wall of Death stunt show Thursday at the Republic of Texas Biker Rally at the Travis County Exposition Center. The rally, one of the biggest in the nation, is expected to draw 40,000 people this weekend.

@ austin360.com/rotrally: Share your photos from the rally, and view images from last year.

GULF COAST ■ SEA LIFE

Signs of an endangered turtle's return to Padre thrill scientists

By Asher Price  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Tracks and eggs belonging to one of the world's largest turtles, the endangered leatherback, have been spotted at Padre Island National Seashore for the first time since the 1930s.

National Park Service staffers ran across the broad tracks — more than 6½ feet wide — while patrolling June 6 for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, the smallest of five species of sea turtles that are found in the Gulf of Mexico.

Instead, they found leatherback tracks. Atlantic leatherback turtles, which may number in the hundreds of thousands, have been "coming back like gangbusters" because of efforts to protect their nesting beaches, said Larry Crowder, a marine biologist at Duke University who specializes in sea turtle population dynamics.

"There's no reason to think it's lost or disoriented or anything like that," Crowder said.

Park Service staff members dug near the

See TURTLE, B6



Brian Myrick DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL  
In Flagler Beach, Fla., a crowd showed up in 2005 to watch a leatherback sea turtle head back to sea after laying eggs in the sand.

ROUND ROCK ■ DEVELOPMENT

Land deals for A&M medical school progressing

By David C. Doolittle  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

ROUND ROCK — Texas A&M University's plans to build a medical school in Round Rock are moving forward at a rapid pace. The first students will begin rotations in the city starting next week.

At its next meeting, the Round Rock City

Council could consider annexing about 14 acres for the first phase of a Round Rock branch of the Texas A&M Health Science Center. It will be at the southwestern corner of County Road 112 and A.W. Grimes Boulevard, an area that is becoming a hub of medical-related learning facilities.

See DEALS, B6

Bikers rumble into city for mix of camaraderie and chrome

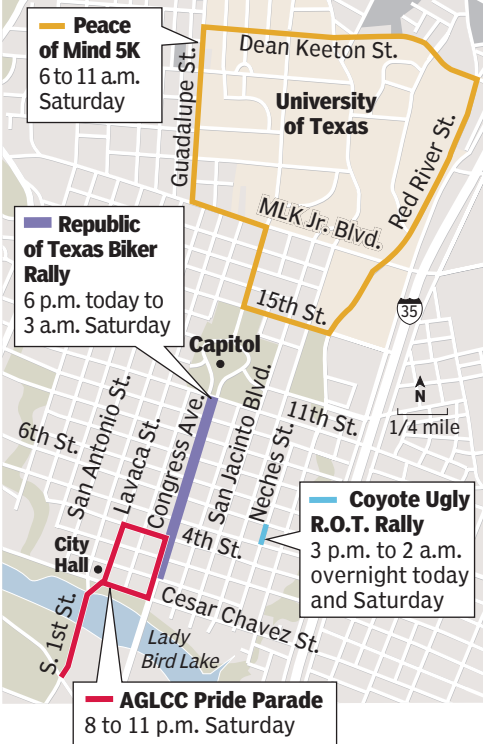
By Mark Lisheran  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Before dark, the orgy of bikes, beer and babes with beads will be well under way, and you can be sure Duane and Donna Wright won't get cheated on any of it. But it is the morning, setup time, on the first day of the Republic of Texas Biker Rally that defines the weekend for the Wrights.

The Wrights rode their Harley-Davidson motorcycles through the night from Princeton, a little town 30 miles north of Dallas, to take their places in line at 5 a.m. Thursday, three hours before the Travis County Exposition Center's grounds opened. By 10 a.m., their camp was staked, their air-conditioned tent was up and Duane Wright was relaxing in a chair under an awning, watching the grassy spaces of the Expo Center fill in.

See RALLY, B5

Weekend events cause street closures



Source: City of Austin AMERICAN-STATESMAN