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Official goes incognito at state hospital

Assemblyman Michael Allen spends a day at the Napa facility, where a technician was killed.

LEE ROMNEY
REPORTING FROM SAN FRANCISCO

Michael Allen slipped on a pair of blue jeans and a short-sleeved polo shirt, forgoing his customary suit.

On this day, he would not be the Santa Rosa assemblyman who has championed safety at the state's mental hospitals — documenting the tales of staff members who have been kicked, punched, bitten or splashed with bodily fluids by some of California's most troubled patients.

When the former psychiatric nurse passed behind the barbed-wire fencing of Napa State Hospital, where patients who have been accused or convicted of crimes are housed, he was introduced as "Michael," a volunteer there to watch and listen.

"I just wanted a very unvarnished, unscripted slice of what it really is like at the state hospital. And I wanted free access to the wards," said Allen, a first-term Democrat who has helped lift the veil on conditions in the hospital system in the wake of a psychiatric technician's strangulation at Napa last fall.

Allen sought a firsthand study without the typical entourage of handlers. He kept the units he planned to visit close to the vest. Even the lone hospital police officer who accompanied him — a condition that mental health officials made clear was non-negotiable — was dressed in street clothes. [See Allen, AA7]



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

A BREAK FROM BRUSH CLEARANCE

Johnny Gonzales with Environmental Land Management refills water for his herd of 130 Boer goats as they graze on the hillside next to Angels Flight in downtown L.A. Gonzales says the goats — popular with residents and workers — are efficient at brush reduction, consuming 15% of their body weight each day.

Protect gay jurors from dismissal, court is urged

Appeal stems from a case involving the removal of a lesbian during jury selection.

CAROL J. WILLIAMS

Trial lawyers should be barred from dismissing potential jurors because of their sexual orientation, defense attorneys argued Thursday in a case that, if successful, could extend constitutional protection from discrimination to homosexuality along with race, creed and gender.

The arguments made to a panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Pasadena arose from a prosecutor's decision last year to strike a lesbian from the jury weighing assault charges brought against a gay Nigerian inmate at the federal lockup in Los Angeles.

The Obama administration has called for "heightened scrutiny" of laws and practices that target gays, and the government has lately expressed its concern about the constitutionality of differing treatment of spouses in same-sex marriages.

In Nigerian-born Daniel

Osazuwa's appeal of his assault conviction before three of the most liberal judges of the 9th Circuit, attorneys with the federal public defender's office argued that gays and lesbians should be added to the classes of citizens considered vulnerable to discrimination and accorded better protection of their rights.

Deputy Public Defender James H. Locklin asked the 9th Circuit panel to find that Osazuwa's trial judge erred in accepting a bogus reason for the prosecutor's dismissal of the lesbian during jury selection. [See Appeal, AA4]

ARCTIC ENERGY PLAN BACKED

A federal agency tentatively agrees to let Shell drill for oil and gas off Alaska.

KIM MURPHY
REPORTING FROM SEATTLE

Shell Exploration was conditionally cleared Thursday to proceed with the most ambitious oil and gas drilling program ever attempted in the U.S. Arctic, a plan that would offer access to a crucial new domestic energy supply in one of the most environmentally fragile regions on Earth.

After years of legal wrangling by Shell and Arctic conservationists, the exploration plan in the Beaufort Sea off the coast of Alaska was tentatively approved by the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, which could clear the way for Shell to begin drilling three exploratory wells as early as next July.

Several key hurdles remain, including federal permits for discharging air pollutants and disturbing the whales, seals, walrus and polar bears that reside near the proposed drilling sites, and those hurdles could easily delay the drilling further, though opponents by now are running short of legal options.

A decision is expected as early as next week on the additional crucial issue of Shell's plan for cleaning up any oil spilled during drilling operations — a matter of [See Arctic, AA5]

Deputy misdeeds are cited in report

A shooting incident prompted by a bumped car is among the cases detailed.

ROBERT FATURECHI

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department watchdog released a report Thursday cataloging several serious examples of deputy misconduct, including one case in which a deputy shot at a motorist who bumped his car at a fast-food restaurant and another in which a deputy covered up a shooting that occurred during a foot pursuit.

The Office of Independent Review compiles the list each year. Officials said that they have not detected an increase in misconduct cases but that it was important to

publicize the wrongdoing of officers in hopes of reducing such incidents.

"It gives the whole profession a black eye," said Michael Gennaco, head of the Office of Independent Review. "We expect our law enforcement officers to enforce laws, not break them."

In the incident at the fast-food restaurant, a deputy in a McDonald's heard his car alarm go off and went outside to find that the vehicle had been hit. He and the other driver agreed to exchange information, but the other driver didn't want to alert police, prompting the deputy to pull his gun out and tell the driver he was a cop.

The other driver, surprised by the statement, got back in his car and drove off.

As the car pulled away, the deputy fired several [See Report, AA5]

Bratz maker wins in court

MGA is awarded \$310 million in the fight with Mattel over rights to the doll line.

ANDREA CHANG

A federal judge on Thursday ordered toy giant Mattel Inc. to pay bitter rival MGA Entertainment Inc. more than \$309 million in damages, fees and other costs in the long-running dispute over the billion-dollar Bratz doll line and rejected Mattel's bid for a new trial.

Isaac Larian, the outspoken chief executive of Van Nuys-based MGA, said he was thrilled by the decision by U.S. District Judge David O. Carter, which he called a "step in the right direction."

"I feel vindicated and I'm very excited," he said. El Segundo-based Mattel said it was disappointed and was evaluating its next steps. "Mattel strongly believes that the outcome at



CHRISTINA HOUSE For The Times

CEO: "I'm happy for MGA, MGA employees and all the people who believed in us," says MGA's Isaac Larian, shown last year with several Bratz dolls.

the trial level is not supported by the evidence or the law," it said in a statement. "We remain committed to finding a reasonable resolution to the litigation."

The explosive case pitted two Southland toy companies against each other:

Mattel, the world's No. 1 toy maker and owner of the Barbie empire, and MGA, a little-known player before it introduced Bratz in 2001. The multiracial dolls known for their big heads, pouty lips and sexy clothing went on to [See Bratz, AA2]



Patrick Dove/AP

Doctor guilty in bogus surgeries

Michael Chan faces up to 28 years for bilking health insurers. AA3

Guns seized from animal shelters

City officials round up the weapons to see if any are missing. AA4

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Coastal clouds, then sun. Downtown Los Angeles: 79/64. AA8

Polygamist sect leader convicted

Warren Jeffs, above, is found guilty of sexually assaulting two child brides. AA2

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