

Scents of spring
Coach, Hilfiger lead the way with new fragrances for the season, 1E

IOWA TODAY[®]

LOCAL ■ REGIONAL ■ STATE

B The Gazette
Wednesday
May 16, 2007

www.gazetteonline.com

CORRIDOR

CEDAR RAPIDS

More open houses set to discuss neighborhoods

A second round of open houses will take place this week as part of the city's Enhance Our Neighborhoods initiative.

The first will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the Time Check Recreation Center, 1131 Fifth St. NW, and the second will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday at Horizons, 819 Fifth St. SE.

At this week's sessions, strategies to address neighborhood issues will be presented to the public for feedback.

Residents in March, at a first round of sessions, told City Hall what they thought the pressing issues confronting the city's neighborhoods were.

Investigation continues into stabbing death

Cedar Rapids police on Tuesday said they were still following up on leads in last week's killing of Dennis First, 64, of 2249 C St. SW.



Dennis First
Killed last week

No arrest had been made as of last night. First was found in his apartment on Friday. He died of blood loss after being stabbed.

CORALVILLE

Drivers identified in head-on collision

Police identified the drivers injured when their cars collided here head-on late Monday afternoon on First Avenue.

Ruth Trimble, 60, of 1215 W. Zeller St., and Samuel Schilling, 30, of 1605 N. James Blvd., Apt. 6, both of North Liberty, were seriously injured when their cars collided near Auburn Hills Drive, police said. They were transported to University Hospitals, which had no information available about their conditions Tuesday.

The accident happened about 5:15 p.m. Monday.

IOWA CITY

Virtual Soldier program to help automakers

The University of Iowa's Virtual Soldier Research program has entered into a \$1.5 million contract with the United States Council for Automotive Research for manufacturing ergonomics research.

Work with the council, comprised of DaimlerChrysler, Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp., will be aimed at helping the U.S. automakers use "digital humans," or computer representations of people, to design safer and more ergonomically acceptable manufacturing plants.

Virtual Soldier, at the UI College of Engineering Center for Computer Aided Design, was established in 2003 to conduct research aimed at creating the most advanced human simulation tools.

First aimed at the military, the program has grown rapidly, securing more than \$13 million in external funding in the past three years, including the automotive contract.

NEWS TIPS

Please call us with your tips for stories and photos: (319) 398-8254 in Cedar Rapids, (319) 339-3159 in Iowa City or 1-(800) 397-8212.

Decision soon on UI interviews

By Gregg Hennigan
The Gazette

IOWA CITY — The public might find out this week whether finalists for the University of Iowa presidency will participate in on-campus interviews, a process endorsed by faculty leaders Tuesday.

Search committee Chairman David Johnsen said last night that the committee will discuss at its Friday meeting how to handle finalist interviews.

"I think it's time," Johnsen

said during a committee meeting.

He did not elaborate, and the committee met for only a couple of minutes in open session before going into closed session to discuss candidates. The committee was to return to open session at about 10 p.m. to adjourn with no further comment.



David Johnsen
Search chairman

A decision on finalist interviews would end months of speculation on an issue deemed vitally important by many on campus who believe a president who hadn't been through a public evaluation would lack credibility. The UI is searching for a successor to David Skorton, who left in June for Cornell University.

The Faculty Council, a leadership group of the Faculty Senate, briefly discussed the interview issue at its meeting Tuesday afternoon. Faculty Senate President Victoria

Sharp said faculty leaders are pushing for on-campus interviews, but they have been given no indication what the search committee will decide.

"How could you not — if you want to be president — not come to campus and meet the people?" said Jerold Woodhead, a council member and an associate professor of pediatrics.

The UI has a tradition of on-campus interviews for presidential finalists, but the

► **SEARCH, 6B**

Being smug over gas prices

No offense to Mayor Kay Halloran, but I'd say City Council member Tom Podzimek has



Linda Detroy Alexander
The Gazette

today's bike/bus race in the bag. That wouldn't be so if Tom, who will ride his bicycle, had to stop and pick up passengers, as the bus on which Kay rides will have to do. The bus, is after all, running its

regular public-transit route. The record for the number of people on one bicycle surely must belong to the Great China Acrobats, who boast that their pyramid of riders includes 19 people. It's hard to imagine the cyclist at the bottom of the human heap moving all that weight. When my two oldest children were toddlers, I pulled them around town and on the trails in a Burley trailer, and that was hard work.

Cedar Rapids' race today doesn't include a car. On Monday, in Iowa City, Johnson County Supervisor Sally Stutsman, who drove her Chevy Blazer, won the fourth annual bike/bus/car race. She waltzed out of the parking ramp at Old Capitol Mall, to which she had driven from Coral Ridge Mall, about 30 seconds before State Sen. Joe Bolkcom, D-Iowa City, arrived on his bike. But Joe should have had a handicap. Spiffed up in a long-sleeved shirt and tie in solidarity with bike commuters, Joe rode in 90-degree heat with a head wind; Sally drove along in air-conditioned comfort.

In last place, naturally, was the bus rider, Iowa City Council member Amy Correa. But she didn't lose as she managed to finish two chapters in the book she's reading. The "race" helped prove what many people in Coralville and Iowa City lose sight of, and that's how silly we are to complain about traffic. Sally and Joe made the trip in less than 15 minutes; the bus was right on schedule.

Monday's race from Coralville to Iowa City and today's race from 42nd and Council streets to City Hall are all in good fun, promoting Bike to Work Week. I haven't noticed more cyclists on the streets of Iowa City as I pedal back and forth between home and the newsroom, but there was a bevy of them in College Green Park early Monday morning for a tasty breakfast of multigrain pancakes, juice and coffee. It did not escape notice that Bicyclists of Iowa City, which hosted the breakfast, provided real mugs and real forks, rather than throw-away Styrofoam and plastic.

Bike to Work Week is part of Bike Month, a national focus on cycling that has been happening every May for 51 years. After all that time, you'd think more attention would be given to making sure cyclists have a fair share of the road. In Iowa City, Coralville and Cedar Rapids, that's starting to happen.

Maybe it will happen more now, with gas at more than \$3 a gallon. I filled my car's tank on Saturday, a \$50 trip. So I'm feeling pretty good about leaving the car in the garage while I bike to work. Cyclists need to do more than just cycle to work. Sure they're helping conserve energy, not polluting and getting exercise, but they also need to pedal to the polls year after year to make sure we have cyclists like Tom and Joe on our councils, our boards of supervisors and in the Statehouse.

► Linda Detroy Alexander's column appears on Wednesdays and Saturdays. She can be reached at (319) 399-5956 or linda.alexander@gazettecommunications.com

LEGACY



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

Pallbearers carry the casket of Verne Upmier from a horse-drawn hearse during his burial at Oakland Cemetery on Tuesday in Solon. Upmier was one of the founders of the Cedar Rapids Horseman's Club as well as being instrumental in the formations of the Iowa Stock Horse Association, Miracles in Motion and the Kirkwood Community College equestrian program.

'Everybody's got their Verne story'

Ely man was longtime fixture in horse circles

By Suzanne Barnes
The Gazette

It would seem that Gene Wehrheim is right when he says, "Everybody's got their Verne story."

Verne Upmier, a longtime fixture in horse circles in Eastern Iowa and across the country, died Friday at age 88. His funeral was Tuesday in Solon.

During his tenure on family land in Ely, he raised, bought, trained and sold thousands of horses.

Upmier, Wehrheim said, "had a way with horses that was beyond anything I've ever seen." He could size them up quickly and get them to do what he wanted without problems.

Once Wehrheim watched as Upmier was reunited with a horse he had trained years earlier. He got on and rode. "It was just like a ballet with him and that horse," Wehrheim said.



Verne Upmier
Died Friday

Wehrheim, the Iowa Lipizzan Association and Dr. Charles Abraham were instrumental in establishing the Verne Upmier Scholarship offered annually since 2003 at Kirkwood Community College.

Ely resident Jim Miller knew Upmier for some 60 years. He remembers many parents dropping kids off at Upmier's for the weekend. "The kids just wanted

to be around horses," Miller said, and Upmier didn't mind.

There would be trail rides and hayrack rides, Miller said. Once, a surprise guest showed up for a trail ride, Upmier told him. It was famed cowboy actor-singer Roy Rogers, who told jokes but didn't sing. His contract forbade it.

Later, Miller ran into Rogers in California. He asked if the story was true. Sure was, said Rogers.

In 1993, when heavy rains flooded not only pasture but the land around his home, Upmier refused to leave. Friends would paddle in on boats to bring him food and water.

Five years earlier, Upmier lent his land, expertise and horses to the fledgling Miracles in Motion.

Stephanie Gilbertson, whose daughter Andrea

was one of the early riders in the therapeutic program for people with physical or cognitive disabilities, said Upmier gave the program advice as well as providing a lot of behind-the-scenes help. Later, he served on the Miracles board.

Gilbertson has a Verne story too, though. At a company picnic on Upmier land, he noticed Andrea's fascination with horses. He told Gilbertson, "If that little girl ever wants a pony ride, you just bring her out here."

When she did, Andrea, then maybe 6 or 7, was provided with "the sweetest little pony." Gilbertson said it didn't belong to Upmier but was a gentle pony he thought would suit her.

► Contact the writer: (319) 398-8434 or suzanne.barnes@gazettecommunications.com

From Bob to bobblehead: It could happen

MAQUOKETA — Sixty-eight years ago Robert LeRoy Head was born in Maquoketa. He



Dave Rasdal
The Gazette

grew up as Bobby and by high school became Bob. All those years he signed his legal name, Robert L. Head, and people simply called him Bob.

No more. Now, since he's become

one of three finalists in a contest for the Portland Beavers minor league team, he is known as Bob L. Head.

If he wins, his image will become a bobblehead doll. "All of these years I didn't realize I was Bob L. Head," he laughs, relaxing in his liv-

How to vote

► To vote for Bob L. Head of Maquoketa to win the Portland Beavers minor league baseball team promotion to have a bobblehead doll made in the likeness of Bob L. Head, go to www.portlandbeavers.com and follow directions. Voting is scheduled to begin today and end May 31.

ing room with his wife, Joan. "I just thought I was a Bob."

But the Portland Beavers thought otherwise. The promotions department targeted Bob along with more than 40

other Bob L. Heads around the United States as likely contestants for their promo-

tion. The team will announce the winner in June for an all-expense paid trip to Portland for the unveiling of 2,000 bobblehead dolls in the winner's likeness at the Aug. 18 game.

Bob received a UPS package in March. It included information about the contest and a bobblehead doll of someone he'd never heard of. He was asked to submit background information and a photograph.

"Bob thought one of our friends had done it as a joke," Joan says.

But, a check of the team's Web site confirmed the contest. So, Bob obliged and on April 30, was notified by telephone that he was a finalist. Voting is up to fans on the team's Web site. And he had to provide a birth certificate



Dave Rasdal/The Gazette

Bob L. Head of Maquoketa has become one of three finalists in the Portland Beavers minor league baseball team promotion to have a bobblehead doll made of his likeness.

► **RAMBLIN', 6B**