



PETER CALLAGHAN

This is the way 2007 went around here

The year 2007 in 627 words: MultiCare demolishes a 90-year-old church to make way for hospital expansion. A Spokane tribe is rewarded for failing to negotiate by getting the most lucrative gambling compact in the state. It snows a lot.

In the earliest start to presidential campaigning, a dozen candidates declare, form exploratory committees or form committees to explore forming exploratory committees. Other tribes get similar gambling expansion deals.

A Yakima lawmaker files a bill so kids won't have to use summer vacation to make up snow days; he calls it the "gone fishing with grandparents" bill. A Seattle lawmaker files a bill to let people take dogs into bars and taverns as long as they behave (the dogs, not the people). The Sonics make a pitch to the Legislature - wrapped in threats - to build an arena in Renton.

House Speaker Frank Chopp falsely accuses NASCAR driver and teetotaler Richard Petty of having a drunken driving arrest. Lakewood seeks to ban derogatory comments at council meetings. Seattle bickers with Gov. Chris Gregoire over what to do with the Alaskan Way Viaduct; they end up doing nothing.

The Tacoma School Board gives superintendent Charles Milligan a satisfactory rating. A 100-ton expansion joint for the new Narrows Bridge gets stuck near Spokane. The University of Washington Tacoma says it will tear down the ugly but loved Dawg Shed. The Legislature benches the Sonics arena bill. The Walla Walla union wins a food fight with the potato to become the official state vegetable. The dog bar bill is banished.

A Gig Harbor vice principal shows parents a security video of two female students kissing. Drivers put Good To Go stickers on their windshields; some do so correctly. MultiCare says it will build an industrial steam plant across from Wright Park.

Dino Rossi says he isn't a candidate for governor even though he looks, sounds and acts like one. Pierce County insists the cross-base highway be included in a regional roads and rail package. Noncandidate Rossi tours the state seeking deposits to his Idea Bank. Tickle Me Elmo, made in China, tries to kill us.

Milligan is fired (or did he resign to pursue other career options?); taxpayers give him a \$418,500 going-away present. Boeing rolls out the Dreamliner jet, or at least a reasonable facsimile. Seattle schools opt for iPod Shuffles to falling students if they'll enroll in summer school, but few do. The second Narrows bridge opens.

Washington holds its first-ever August primary. Kevin Costner hangs out in DuPont. Nick Levey hangs out in South 19th and Tyler. Longtime state Democratic chairwoman Karen Marchioro dies. U.S. Rep. Brian Baird is condemned by fellow Democrats for changing his mind - slightly - on Iraq. Longtime state Republican chairwoman and Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn dies. Boeing announces delays in delivering new Dreamliner.

A thief makes a prize-winning Puyallup Fair bunny disappear. "Sold" signs in front of houses become endangered species. Sonics owners say they'll move the team to Oklahoma City. King County Executive Ron Sims opposes the roads and transit package he helped craft.

The state Supreme Court says government can't sanction politicians for lying. Noncandidate Gregoire tours the state for town hall meetings; Rossi accuses her of making unauthorized withdrawals from the Idea Bank.

U.S. Sen. Larry Craig's arrest in an airport restroom causes men to reassess their stances. Voters reject the roads and transit package, and approve simple majority for school levies. Boeing hints it will need an even larger subsidy to build the next jetliner here. The Legislature meets in special session to reinstate voter-approved I-747 after the Supreme Court says voters didn't know what they were doing. It rains a lot.

The shrinking GOP minority in the Legislature shrinks a bit more as Mercer Island Rep. Fred Jarrett changes parties.

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Update coming on Town Center

In closed meeting, University Place expects news on huge development

University Place leaders will meet in executive session Wednesday about the immediate future of the Town Center project. More delays might be in store.

BY BRENT CHAMPACO
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University Place officials are hinting that construction of the \$250 million Town Center project could hit a

speed bump this year.

City Manager Bob Jean said Monday that the city and the project's New York developer, Aaron Lichtman, have met their deadlines so far, "but we both have concerns about how things come together in 2008."

The City Council will hold a special meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday to discuss the project. It will meet in executive session for about an hour. Jean wouldn't specify what aspect of

Town Center's development concerns city leaders, only that the project's construction schedule is one of them.

He added that he doesn't expect the scope of the project - a development that will offer retail, civic services, condos, lodging and other amenities - to change.

An underground, three-story parking garage represents the only construction so far at the project's site off 37th Avenue West. Were it not for a giant crane, pass-

ers-by on Bridgeport Way West might not even notice the work.

The garage and Park & Ride - which is partially funded by more than \$5 million in federal money - is scheduled for completion in February. Its construction is about a week ahead of schedule.

The city also has cleared dirt for a future street that will run through Town Center, and is to begin building the

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PIRATES, PERFORMERS AND PARTYS



Photos by DEAN J. KOEFLER/The News Tribune

Eric Haines, on stilts, is part of a roving band of pirates who celebrated First Night by tossing candy and pretending to sword fight Monday in Tacoma.

First Night rings in new year

After a two-year hiatus, First Night returns to downtown Tacoma, bringing with it pirate-themed family fun to welcome 2008.

IAN DEMSKY

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With hearty pirate cheers of "Non-offensive battle cry!" Tacoma once again rang in the New Year with a First Night celebration following a two-year hiatus.

The family-themed, alcohol-free event graced downtown from noon into double-night eight. This year's theme: "The Year of the Pirate" in honor of the Tall Ships festival next year (not Dale Chihuly's eye patch).

A parade kicked off at 7 p.m., with a merry band of seafarers marching up Broadway to the beat of thudding drums.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

Send us your pictures from First Night or your New Year's Eve celebration. All you need to do is send them to youandme@thenewtribune.com. Include with each entry your full name, the city you live in and a caption that tells where the picture was taken and what's going on. The paper and full and unlimited rights to submissions.

The event had everything a kid could want: a stiltwalker, fire juggler, a cascade of bubbles, glow sticks, candy, Chinese dragon dancers, music, crafts and performances.

Tony and Julie Davidson-Gomez deco-

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Two-month-old Ellen Colbeck of Tacoma rests while sister Sofia tries on a pirate hat she made with the help of her dad, Thomas.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

First Methodist still in transition over building

Tacoma's First United Methodist Church anticipates moving into a new, permanent home after selling and demolishing its historic church for hospital expansions.

BY STEVE MAYNARD

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A year after historic First United Methodist Church in Tacoma was torn down, Harriet Huffman is looking forward to her congregation moving into another



BRUCE KELLMAN/The News Tribune file

First United Methodist Church is demolished Jan. 9, 2007.

building a few blocks away.

In May, when its \$5.5 million renovation is complete, First Methodist's new home - the former Bekins Moving & Storage Co. building in downtown Tacoma - will be dedicated.

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SEX STING EXPERIMENT

Men respond to Web ads trying to gauge prostitution

Local law enforcement agencies fighting prostitution target the street corner more than the Web. But there's plenty of it online.

Editor's note: This article contains information about prostitution and sexual activity.

BY IAN DEMSKY

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When it comes to finding clients, the modern streetwalker lets her fingers do most of the work, the click clack of a computer keyboard replacing the sound of siletto heels pacing the pavement.

Just how much illicit e-commerce is

going on in the area is hard to measure. But after File drew attention to the issue recently when it passed an ordinance targeting online sex solicitation, we decided to set up an experiment to attempt to find out.

The File ordinance is the first in Washington to target Internet sex ads. And there are a lot of them. A quick

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COLD CASE

The FBI renews its plea for help from the public in solving the 38-year-old mystery of hijacker D.B. Cooper. B2

COMING WEDNESDAY IN SOUTH SOUND

A Spanaway girl writes about what it's like having her parents as teachers at Pioneer Elementary. IN SHOW&TELL

FIRST NIGHT

CONTINUED FROM B1

rated paper pirate hats with Diego, 3, and Gabi, 6 at the Children's Museum of Tacoma.

"It's not a spectator event," Tony said as Diego stuck green feathers next to a skull on his hat. "It's a great way to celebrate New Year's as a family."

Steve Scheide, 22, and Tealah Hill, 21, stood near the main stage holding signs offering "Free Hugs."

"I had a woman tell me, 'Damn, that's good for your soul,'" Scheide said.

The chilly night air didn't keep away the crowds — one pirate showed off the fleece keeping her warm saying, "Now you've been fleeced by a pirate. Arr!"

"It's very much a tradition for our family. Some people set off fireworks, we always go to First Night. When it didn't happen we were just crushed."

ANITA BENINGER

whose family has been coming First Night since it first started in 1992

The celebration "provides a strong vehicle to recreate the sense of community most of our cities have lost," the event's Web site says.

More than 100 cities around the world also hosted First Night events. The annual festival originated in Boston in 1976 and first came to Tacoma in 1992.

This year's celebration was scaled down from previous years. The last one, held Dec. 31, 2004, ran up a \$50,000 debt after prom-

ised grants failed to materialize, organizers said.

This year's \$75,000 budget was about 60 percent of the previous one.

But many were happy for the event's return.

The Beninger family has been coming to the event since it first started. Anita was very pregnant with son Vigo during the first one — he was born three days later.

Now 16, Vigo and his younger

sister are volunteering at the event.

"It's very much a tradition for our family," Anita Beninger said. "Some people set off fireworks, we always go to First Night. When it didn't happen we were just crushed."

The family has missed two years, 1999 for a flooded basement and 2000 for a millennium party. Kevin Beninger said he liked being able to take the family to an arts-centered event and not having to be around a lot of intoxicated people.

"Last year we ended up watching some Mount Everest thing on TV," Anita Beninger said. "The year before we went bowling. When we saw the ad in the paper this year, we had to volunteer — we wanted to see it come back."

Jan Demsky: 253-597-8872



DEAN J. KOEPLER/The News Tribune

Jon Breed, 4, of Gig Harbor, reaches for bubbles swirling over the crowd on Broadway during Monday's First Night in Tacoma.

CENTER

CONTINUED FROM B1

project's public square this summer.

UP has borrowed \$19 million in bonds to buy land, construct the garage, build streets and make

other public improvements to Town Center. It will have borrowed about \$27 million by the time Lichtman buys the site from the city, Jean said.

But the developer hasn't started construction on the buildings residents and shoppers have waited years to see. The first of Town

Center's retail shops are to open in 2009.

Jean said officials had hoped the developer would have started building the project's university building last fall. The city announced last year that the building's main tenant will be the Washington State University

Pierce County Extension. Jean said Monday that hasn't happened.

"We have reached a tentative agreement with the county, and we expect to sign a lease as soon as we can tell them the completion date," he said.

Jean said officials hope con-

struction on the university building can start this spring, which would keep Town Center's construction timetable on track.

UP was scheduled to temporarily move its offices while the developer builds its future City Hall and library building, which is to open 2009. City leaders could de-

cide Wednesday whether that's still the plan.

"Depending on what happens in executive session, we may come out of that meeting that night with an announcement," Mayor Gerald Gehring said Monday. "We may not."

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WEB ADS

CONTINUED FROM B1

check one day last week turned up more than 1,000 "escort" ads in the South Sound on one Web site, the free online bulletin board Craigslist.

Told of the large numbers of Internet solicitations we found, law enforcement agencies in other local jurisdictions said they're aware of online flesh peddling, but have mainly chosen to target their limited resources at "real world" prostitutes who are disruptive to local businesses and residential neighborhoods.

Spokesman Lt. Dave Guttu said Lakewood police had done a couple of stings using Craigslist, but made relatively few arrests considering the time and manpower required.

"And there's a lot of down time," he said.

The Pierce County Sheriff's Department tried a Craigslist operation, but also found it labor intensive, spokesman Ed Troger said. With only limited funding for vice operations, such operations won't be a priority in the future, he said.

Tacoma police spokesman

CALLING ALL READERS

To what degree do you think online prostitution is a problem, and what, if anything, should law enforcement do about it? To have your opinion considered for a future article, e-mail jan.demsky@thenewstribune.com. Include your name and hometown.

Mark Fulghum said, "We get a lot more complaints about prostitution on the streets."

"Police in other jurisdictions have set up sting operations on Craigslist. In Seattle last year, officers using a covert ad arrested 71 people, including a bank officer and a surgeon. A recent Cook County, Ill., operation rounded up 60 women."

So what The News Tribune wondered was: How many people in the South Sound are using the Internet to find pay-for-play sex?

To measure the phenomenon, we recently posted an ad in the "casual encounters" section of the Web site.

We said we were a 28-year-old woman who wanted someone to "warm me up," stated the ad, which was modeled on existing ads. "I don't care if you're married (not my problem!!) or how old you are or what race."

We weren't explicit about wanting money, but put the responders

on notice that they had to have a job and know how to "TAKE CARE of a lady."

"Please tell me a little about yourself and what you would like to do to me," We wrote. "Your pic gets mine, hope to see you soon!"

The first responses started rolling in almost immediately — we had 20 within the first half hour. The next day Craigslist flagged the ad as inappropriate and removed it, but by then we had garnered nearly 200 responses, many with pictures.

The responses ranged from romantic to pornographic. Here's a typical one, which also included a chest-down photo of a man partially exposing himself.

"I am 44 years old and am very sexual ... I love to be pleased and to please others. I have a great sense of humor and am fun to hang with ... I won't be baggage for you as I'm not looking for [a long-term relationship] since I'm married. I am definitely disesae

er or her affection on just about anyone, we were naive, too. We got far more apparently sincere and heartfelt responses than we expected.

"Hi, my name is **** and I am educated, well traveled, am co-owner of a business, have a good life and many interests. Among them are cooking, painting, film, reading, and exploring new places."

We wanted to take better stock of how many men were using the Web site to find prostitutes and not just "no strings attached" sex partners.

We discovered another section where Craigslist hosts ads for "escort services": This is where typical escort-type come-ons are posted.

"INCALLS SPECIALS WITH ASAFE DISCREET LOCATION / NO RUSHING NO RIP OFFS!" one fairly typical ad reads.

So, we posted another, more direct ad. This time we said we were a graduate student who wanted "more presents under her tree."

It brought in a handful of responses — "Hey I know its late but dont worrie im sober and a nice guy just bored with a few bucks to

spend" — even though, unlike the vast majority of the ads in that section, we did not include a photo or a phone number.

To compete with the real escorts, we posted a third and final ad that included both.

The photo was of a woman in a tight shirt with her face partially obscured. She also recorded a new outgoing message at an empty desk in the newsroom: "This is Sabrina. If you're looking for an appointment, leave a message."

We don't have caller ID, so we can't tell you exactly how many people called. But five messages were left on our answering machine over the next 48 hours. (Though one man seemed to be trying to contact our obituary department.)

The two erotic services ads we posted netted 16 e-mail responses before we took the ads down. The most frequent inquiry was whether we offered unprotected oral sex.

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Through that date, B&I Merchant receipts dated from October 1, 2007 thru February 29, 2008, will be accepted in exchange for gas cards in the B&I's gas card redemption promotion. Any receipts taken to the B&I Main Office on March 1, 2008 or there-after cannot be redeemed for gas cards. Thank you for shopping at the B&I. We appreciate your business.

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