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COLUMN ONE

Can One Man Turn the Tide?

As erosion eats away at tiny Newtok, Alaska, the relocation of its Yupik Eskimo villagers and their homes has fallen to the local grocer.

By TOMAS ALEX TIZON
Times Staff Writer

NEWTOK, Alaska — The boys hunt for mastodon bones on the tundra as the women and girls gather salmonberries from their secret spots in the hills. The men keep busy with various manly things, fishing and fixing roofs and hauling water from the community well.

It's another sunny afternoon in this Eskimo village of 340 on Alaska's west coast, and there isn't the slightest hint that life is approaching a cataclysmic change. In as little as 10 years, the whole village will be swallowed up by a torrent of water from the Ninglick River, and an ancient way of life will be erased.

"It's like a razor blade down there, just chopping away at the beach," says Phil Kusayak, the school custodian, eyeing the waves in the near distance. "Pretty soon, it'll all be water."

But Newtok residents aren't panicking, because they have a plan: to move the entire village, buildings and all, to a spot across the river, nine miles away on the north end of Nelson Island.

Villagers obtained the site for their new home in a land swap with the federal government in April. The town, which proposed the swap, got 11,000 acres on Nelson in exchange for giving up their village plus 12,000 adjacent acres, all of which will become part of a wildlife refuge that is already mostly tundra and marsh.

The move would be unprecedented — if it happens.

Officials acknowledge the urgency of the situation, but the cost and complexity of relocating a village have proved daunting. It would require potentially hundreds of millions of dollars and the coordination of several state and federal agencies, and no agency or politician has dared to take the lead. By default, the Newtok people have been left to save themselves.

Right now, their relocation fund stands at zero.

Stanley Tom knows better than anyone what is at stake.

Tom, 44, is the village grocer. He is short and bespectacled, with a wispy black mustache and eyes that, of late, have been twitchy. The village has placed the entire burden of the relocation on his shoulders. Ask villagers about the move and they will respond with some version of "Ask Stanley."

He is a Yupik Eskimo, born and raised in this community on [See Village, Page A24]



PILING IT ON: The Red Sox celebrate after beating the Cardinals, 3-0, at St. Louis in Game 4 to sweep the World Series. It was Boston's first victory in the Fall Classic since 1918. **D1**

Red Sox Break Spell and Sweep the Series

By ELIZABETH MEHREN
AND DAVID WHARTON
Times Staff Writers

BOSTON — After decades of suffering, all those years of waiting for the Red Sox to break the curse and win a World Series, Wil Porter figured there was only one thing to do.

The longtime fan placed a folding chair in front of Fenway Park and sat alone, listening to the ballgame on a transistor radio.

"This is the pure way," said Porter, 38, of Quincy, Mass. "This is where it all began."

Twelve hundred miles to the west, his team put a joyous and convincing end to the misery Wednesday night with a 3-0 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals and a sweep of the World Series.

The rough-hewn Red Sox — known for their facial hair and timely hitting, if not a few errors in the field — not only won their first championship since 1918, they steamrolled a team that had the best regular-season record in baseball.

"I know there's a whole lot of happy people back in the city of Boston," center fielder Johnny Damon said.

Gone was the so-called Curse of the Bambino. Washed away [See Red Sox, Page A23]

Arafat Health Is Said to Worsen; Panel Named

Emergency committee will handle day-to-day affairs if he is unable. Israelis as well as Palestinians fear chaos if a power vacuum results.

By LAURA KING
AND MAHER ABUKHATER
Special to The Times

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who has been ailing for more than a week, collapsed and fell briefly into unconsciousness Wednesday night at his compound, Palestinian officials said.

Doctors and senior aides were urgently summoned to the 75-year-old Arafat's half-ruined headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Palestinian officials said a three-member committee had been chosen to handle day-to-day affairs in the event that Arafat — who has always refused to designate a successor — cannot.

Though there have been scares over Arafat's health before, this is the first time any kind of panel has been named to take over in case he becomes incapacitated.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said that all Palestinian security forces had been ordered to report for duty.



AILING: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has been said to be suffering from gallbladder disease, the flu or both.

RELATED STORIES

No referendum: Sharon rejects call for vote on Gaza plan. **A5**
Verdict: Owners of collapsed hall in Jerusalem are guilty. **A5**

Israeli and Palestinian officials have long feared that Arafat's death or incapacitation could trigger a slide into chaos in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli media reported this year that the Israeli army had rehearsed war game scenarios of riots breaking out across the Palestinian territories on Arafat's [See Arafat, Page A6]

THE TIMES POLL

Bush, Kerry Split in 3 Key Swing States

Surveys in Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania see a fight to the finish. Experts say whoever wins two of them has the inside track to victory.

By RONALD BROWNSTEIN
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Diverging trends in the three largest battleground states point toward a volatile and tense finish in the presidential race, new Times polls show.

The surveys find President Bush holding an 8-percentage-point lead among likely voters in Florida, Sen. John F. Kerry opening a 6-percentage-point advantage in Ohio, and the two men battling to a dead heat in Pennsylvania.

These three states have drawn more time and attention from the candidates than any others, and many analysts in both parties think that whoever wins two of them will have a clear advantage in the race for the 270 electoral votes needed to win the White House.

The Times' results portray a slightly closer race in Pennsylvania than most other recent public surveys, which have shown Kerry with leads of 2 to 5 percentage points.

In Ohio and Florida, surveys over the last few weeks have oscillated, with Kerry and Bush trading the lead depending on the poll. But Kerry's advantage in Ohio in The Times survey is larger than in any other public poll this month, and Bush's edge in Florida is larger than in any other recent public survey except a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll conducted last week that also found him leading by 8 points.

The conflicting public polling results, especially in Ohio and Florida, seem certain to reinforce both campaigns' belief that these three vital states remain within reach for each of them — with their competing efforts to turn out the vote likely to tip the balance.

"Unless something breaks loose in the next couple of days... it is going to be a muscle campaign on election day," said John C. Green, a University of Akron political scientist.

The Times Poll, supervised by polling director Susan Pinkus, surveyed 941 registered voters in Florida, of which 510 were deemed likely to vote; 1,026 registered voters in Ohio, of which 585 were deemed likely to vote; and 927 in Pennsylvania, of which 585 were deemed likely to vote. The survey was conducted Friday through Tuesday, and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points among likely voters.

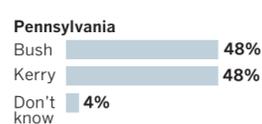
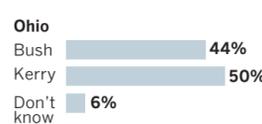
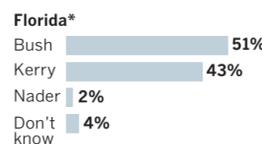
Ohio (with 20 electoral votes) and Florida (with 27) are the top targets for Kerry among states that Bush carried last time. Pennsylvania (with 21 electoral [See Poll, Page A20]

RELATED STORIES

Early voting: A record trend, but with problems. **A16**
Lawsuits: Lawyers not waiting for the polls to close. **A17**

A horse race

Q. If the election were held today, for whom would you vote?



* Ralph Nader is on the ballot in Florida, but not in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Source: Times poll

PAUL DUGINSKI Los Angeles Times

Candidates Feud Over Iraq Arms

Bush breaks his silence on the disappearance of explosives, saying his rival is denigrating troops. Kerry continues to blame the president.

By WARREN VIETH
AND MATEA GOLD
Times Staff Writers

PONTIAC, Mich. — President Bush fought Wednesday to contain the political fallout from a cache of missing military explosives in Iraq, accusing Democratic Sen. John F. Kerry of making "wild charges" and of denigrating U.S. forces.

In his first public remarks on the disappearance of 380 tons of conventional explosives near Baghdad, Bush said Kerry was jumping to conclusions and "denigrating the actions of our troops and commanders in the field" without knowing the facts.

"Unfortunately, that's part of a pattern of saying anything it takes to get elected," Bush said during a campaign stop in Vienna, Ohio.

The president, breaking two days of silence on the issue, said military authorities were investigating a number of explanations, including the possibility that former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein removed the explosives from a set of bunkers before coalition troops arrived.

Kerry, in turn, said the president was "dodging and bobbing and weaving" to avoid responsibility for the failure of coalition forces to secure the bunkers of explosives after the fall of Hussein's regime in April 2003.

Hours after Bush accused him of denigrating U.S. soldiers, the Democratic nominee shot [See Campaign, Page A14]

Humans' Ancestral Tree Adds a Twig

By ROBERT LEE HOTZ
Times Staff Writer

On an isolated Indonesian island, scientists have discovered skeletons of a previously unknown human species — tiny, Hobbit-sized figures who lived among dwarf elephants and giant lizards as recently as 12,000 years ago.

Experts in human origins called the discovery, made public Wednesday, of an extinct human species barely 3 feet tall the most important — and surprising — human find in the last 50 years.

"It is probably the most significant thing that has happened in my professional lifetime," said George Washington University paleoanthropologist Bernard Wood. "It comes out of nowhere."

Found last year in a deep cave on an island called Flores east of Java, the creatures had the smallest brains and shortest bodies of any known human rela-



OUR TINY COUSINS: On an Indonesian island, bones were found of a 3-foot species whose survival strategy was simple: grow smaller. The new species' skull, left, with a Homo sapiens version.

tives of the last 4 million years. Yet, on the time scale of human beginnings, the skeletal remains were so new that the bones had yet to actually fossilize. The creatures lived at the same time as

modern Homo sapiens.

Over the last 13 months, a team of Australian and Indonesian researchers led by paleoanthropologist Peter Brown at [See Species, Page A4]

Cameras to Keep Watch in Hollywood

By JESSICA GARRISON
Times Staff Writer

In a new step for crime fighting in Los Angeles, the Police Department plans to start installing surveillance cameras on city streets, beginning with Hollywood Boulevard.

Five video cameras will train their electronic eyes on one of the world's most famous — and infamous — streets as early as January. And if all goes according to plan, there eventually will be 64 cameras on Hollywood, Santa Monica and Sunset boulevards and Western Avenue.

The Hollywood-area cameras are the beginning what some city officials hope will be a wave of virtual law enforcement that will help the understaffed LAPD investigate and deter crime from the San Fernando Valley to South Los Angeles.

Although the City Council and the Police Department have not yet devised a comprehensive [See Cameras, Page A23]

INSIDE

Chumash Casino Review

A report on tribal regulators' criminal histories prompts a federal agency to call for talks about possible reforms. **B5**

From Hall to Home

As Disney Hall architect Frank Gehry finishes plans for his Venice dream house, he quietly woos his new neighbors. **Home**

Weather

Partly cloudy, cool and breezy. L.A. Downtown: 64/51. **B14**

News SummaryA2



Ovitz Details Pain of Split With Eisner in Emotional Testimony

By RICHARD VERRIER
Times Staff Writer

GEORGETOWN, Del. — When Walt Disney Co. Chief Executive Michael Eisner fired his longtime buddy Michael Ovitz as second-in-command, he offered a prediction about their future.

"We have been doing business together while being friends for many years," Eisner said that day in the winter of 1996. "And I know that both our personal and professional relationships will continue."

On Wednesday, Ovitz took the witness stand here for a

second day of testimony in a Disney shareholder suit and left little doubt about just how wrong Eisner was.

In an extraordinary five-minute soliloquy, Ovitz spoke of a betrayal by Eisner that he said left him shattered and bewildered.

"I was best friends with this guy and his family," said Ovitz, who was Hollywood's most powerful agent before becoming Disney's president. "I loved this guy like a brother. We spent holidays together. I was at the funeral of one of his parents, he was at the birth of [See Ovitz, Page A26]