

Hip-hop duds win

UCA student's line takes a first-place spot at business competition. — Business, 1D



Fare weather

Restaurant patios offer views of baseball, cityscape and passers-by. — Weekend

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In the news

■ **Robert Sturgell**, the acting director of the Federal Aviation Administration, told senators that following Europe's lead and lifting a ban on in-flight cell-phone calls was "far, far, far, far down" his list of priorities, an admission that Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., greeted with relief, saying, "So that means you'll never get to it, which is fine with me."

■ **Emilio Navaira**, 45, the Grammy-winning Tejano singer, has been upgraded from critical to fair condition, more than three weeks after he was injured in a bus accident near Houston.

■ **Michael Bloomberg**, New York City's independent mayor who decided against a 2008 White House run, said his endorsement will go to the candidate "willing to accept reality" and make compromises, adding that even if he doesn't agree with the candidate on all issues, "at least we'll have an adult in office who can lead and can accomplish something."

■ **Elba Guillen**, a spokesman for the Venezuelan television station Televen, said *The Simpsons*, which was pulled off the air and replaced with *Baywatch Hawaii* after regulators said the show was inappropriate for children and its 11 a.m. time slot, is back on the air, this time at 7 p.m.

■ **Mike Burgess**, sheriff of Custer County, Okla., has resigned after state prosecutors filed 35 felony charges against him, including second-degree rape, forcible oral sodomy and bribery by a public official, over allegations that he coerced and bribed female inmates to comply with his sexual demands.

■ **Daniela Salaoru**, spokesman for Romania's Ialomita County police, said a 24-year-old man, whom she did not identify, has been fined \$223 for making 6,442 profane phone calls to an emergency number.

■ **Frankie Roche**, 35, pleaded guilty in a Springfield, Mass., court to a federal charge of murder in aid of racketeering for the Nov. 23, 2003, shooting death of Adolfo "Big Al" Bruno, a regional boss of the New York-based Genovese family, whom Roche said he killed in exchange for \$10,000 from Bruno's rivals.

■ **Bob Dole** and Howard Baker, both Republicans, are joining forces with Democrats George Mitchell and Tom Daschle to suggest changes to the nation's health-care system, with the four former Senate majority leaders working to craft recommendations to be delivered in 2009 to a new president and Congress.

■ **Shaun Greenhalgh**, 47, and his parents, George and Olive, all of whom were convicted last year of selling forged artworks between 1989 and 2006, have been ordered by a London judge to pay back more than \$800,000 to some of the institutions they defrauded.

WEATHER

LITTLE ROCK
Today Showers and thunderstorms.
High Upper 60s, south winds at 10 to 25 mph.
Tonight Decreasing clouds and cooler.
Low Upper 40s.



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The pope arrives Thursday at Washington Nationals stadium for an open-air Mass before 46,000.

Pope's 1st public Mass in U.S. draws 46,000

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE PRESS SERVICES

WASHINGTON — Pope Benedict XVI celebrated his first public Mass in the United States on Thursday morning before tens of thousands of people at Washington Nationals stadium.

The 81-year-old pontiff entered the stadium to cheers from a crowd of 46,000. "Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to be with you," the pope said.

The papal visit has attracted Catholics from across the country, and the audience at Thursday's Mass reflected the diversity of the church. The sunlit stadium was filled with pageantry and color, the clergy's red and white vestments, robed choirs, and yellow and white banners.

"I feel like I am in a bit of heaven today," said Patricia Janiak of Webster, N.Y.

Benedict delivered a homily in English and Spanish that touched on messages he has delivered throughout his visit — the need to repair the damage of the sexual-abuse scandal that has torn the church and to strengthen Catholics' commitment to the church's teachings in a secular society.

"Who can deny that the present moment is a crossroads?" See **POPE**, Page 7A



Gene Starks and his granddaughter Stormy White, 6, of Georgetown stand Tuesday along the submerged edge of Arkansas 36, one of only two roads into their White County town.

Georgetown stands alone

A few hardy souls stick it out in marooned hamlet

BY JOHN KRUPA
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

GEORGETOWN — J.D. Hughes put on his rubber boots, hiked up into a pool of murky water and took a seat on the hood of a flooded car.

There the 12-year-old sat — alone — shooting bottle rockets into the air over and over again.

There's not much else to do when you've been marooned by floods for nearly a month.

About 50 residents of this White County town have been living like modern-day Robinson Crusoes since the high water came on March 22.

Georgetown is on a hill, so few houses have flooded.

But the swollen White and Little Red rivers have swamped Arkansas 36 and Jones Island Road, the only routes in and out of town, for 28 consecutive days. The only reliable route out is a twisting, 24-mile river trek that leads to high ground in West



Georgetown Volunteer Fire Department Chief Eddie Stephenson mows his lawn Tuesday after finishing the lawns of several other people who left their homes as floodwaters rose.

Georgetown Volunteer Fire Department Chief Eddie Stephenson mows his lawn Tuesday after finishing the lawns of several other people who left their homes as floodwaters rose.

one parent moved out to work while another stayed behind to guard the house. Those who Some families have split as

See **MAROONED**, Page 6A

CHICOT COUNTY CURIOSITY

Candidate dies, but campaign lives

BY MIKE LINN
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Former Chicot County Judge Fred Zieman has died, but his campaign for re-election is alive and well.

Zieman, who served 3½ terms, died after suffering a stroke March 18, eight days after the filing period ended for county judge and the day after the county clerk's office ordered the ballots for the May primary.

That means his name will remain on the ballots.

His opponent in the Democratic primary, Mack Ball Jr. of

"Arkansas politics is always weird isn't it?"

— ART ENGLISH, a political science professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Eudora, would seemingly have an easy path to victory.

But not so.

A group is still seeking votes for Zieman, whose election would prompt the Democratic Party to declare a vacancy and hold a special election or nomi-

nate a candidate to fill the spot.

On Wednesday, a group called Taxpayers for Choice even purchased advertising space in the *Chicot County Spectator*, the county newspaper.

"Vote for Fred Zieman Chicot County judge," the group's ad reads.

"Through an act of God voters in Chicot County appear to have been disenfranchised, 'deprived of the right to vote for their person of choice for Chicot County judge.' The key word of course is appear. The facts are:

See **CHICOT** Page 5A

39th officer learns contractors' ways

Arkansan is clued in about Iraqis he'll be dealing with on projects

BY AMY SCHLESING
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

CAMP SLAYER, Iraq — On a gravel lot near the main gate into camp, Maj. Brian Bobo reached out and embraced the Iraqi contractors in a final farewell.

"We will miss you," a contractor named Gazi told him. "You have been good to us."

"And thank you for all you have done for us," Bobo said.

Gazi and another contractor, Waleed, have worked to build schools, water systems and other projects using U.S. Department of Defense dollars. Bobo is the man with the checkbook — at least in the eyes of these contractors. He's the civil military affairs officer for North Dakota's 164th Engineer Battalion.

For a week now, Bobo has spent his days introducing Capt. Bill Jones of Fort Smith to the sheiks, the community leaders and the contractors who live and work in the small strip of

FUNDING, GUIDANCE slim for those trying to help stabilize Afghanistan, Iraq, Snyder panel says. Page 11A.

land that the 1st Battalion of Arkansas' 39th Infantry Brigade will patrol near Baghdad International Airport.

The 164th is heading home and handing over operations to the 1st Battalion.

While soldiers from various units within the brigade spend time with the units they're replacing, Jones is spending his days getting to know the Iraqis he'll be helping. They are his responsibility.

As a civil military affairs officer, Jones serves as the liaison between communities in the 1st Battalion's patrol area outside Camp Slayer and the U.S. military. He will regularly meet with sheiks and city council members, and hire contractors for local improvement projects.

It's not an easy job.

"The contractors file bad

See **39TH**, Page 11A

50 killed at funeral for foes of al-Qaida

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE PRESS SERVICES

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber struck the funeral of two Sunni tribesmen who joined forces against al-Qaida-in-Iraq, killing at least 50 people Thursday.

The attack came two days after a string of suicide bombings in four cities of northern and central Iraq killed 60 people — attacks that U.S. officials blamed on al-Qaida-in-Iraq.

Violence across the country, including suicide bombings like Thursday's, has declined since seven months ago. American officials credit the change to the U.S. troop buildup and the rise of Sunni tribal groups known as Awakening Councils that have turned against al-Qaida-linked militants. A truce called last year by anti-U.S. Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has also helped.

But the new bloodshed high-



An Iraqi woman grieves over the body of a relative killed in a suicide bombing Thursday in Albu Mohammad, north of Baghdad.

lights how fragile those gains are.

Thursday's attack happened in the town of Albu Mohammad, about 90 miles north of Baghdad. A suicide bomber dressed

See **IRAQ**, Page 12A

Turning his back on debates?



Amid criticism over the way ABC News conducted the Democratic presidential debate Wednesday in Philadelphia, Barack Obama hinted Thursday that there may not be any more debates during the primaries.

Article, 10A