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Oroville robbery suspect likely hit Chico bank

By **GREG WELTER**
Staff Writer

CHICO — A woman arrested Tuesday for allegedly robbing a credit union in Oroville may be the prime suspect in the robbery of Butte Community Bank in Chico Thursday afternoon.

Chico police believe they might be looking for Laura Jane Murray, 48, of Durham.

Murray allegedly approached two Oroville police detectives in Paradise Wednesday, as they were about to impound her car as evidence, and admitted she had robbed the Sierra Central Credit Union on Oro Dam Boulevard.

About \$3,700 of the \$3,900 taken from the bank was found on Murray. She reportedly used the missing money to purchase a cell phone almost immediately after the robbery.

The credit union reportedly got the money back, and a receipt for the cell phone.

Murray was arrested, but taken to Oroville Hospital rather than jail when she explained she suffered from a serious or infectious medical condition.

Chico police sergeant Rob Merrifield said Murray was under police guard at the hospital, but later released. He referenced a California

■ See **SUSPECT, 7A**



Chico police Lt. Linda Dye investigates Butte Community Bank on Mangrove Avenue that was robbed Thursday.

Jason Halley
Staff Photo

Saving salmon

Trapped fish moved to cooler water on Butte Creek

By **HEATHER HACKING**
Staff Writer

CHICO — Workers cast a net across Butte Creek near Estates Way Wednesday morning, corralling dozens of spring-run Chinook salmon that had come to the end of their journey due to warm water.

Divers placed the nets to enclose the fish, which were later moved via hand-held nets to a holding area within the creek. The fish were then moved to a truck, bucket-brigade style, to be transported to cooler water upstream.

The Department of Fish and Game moved 70 fish, which doesn't seem like many. However, the entire run of the endangered spring-run Chinook looks like it will only be 400 this year in Butte Creek, including the fish rescued.

■ See **SALMON, 7A**



Bill Husa/Staff Photos

Fish and Game employees carry a salmon in a net from the Butte Creek to a truck as trapped fish are moved farther up the creek to cooler water.

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View a photo gallery of the fish move, chicoer.com/multimedia



Suspect bound over for trial in hatchet killings

By **TERRY VAU DELL**
Staff Writer

OROVILLE — A judge ruled Thursday there is sufficient evidence to hold a former neighbor to stand trial in the hatchet slaying of a Berry Creek couple.

A multiple-murder finding makes Allen Lee Leverette, 41, eligible for the death penalty, although prosecutors said they have not yet decided whether to seek capital punishment in the case.

Leverette's lawyer, Mark Stapleton, said outside of court he received a packet of mental health records concerning his client that he needs to examine before determining whether to pursue an insanity defense.

During a preliminary hearing for Leverette in Butte County Superior Court Thursday, the victims' adult son recounted the horrifying discovery of the battered body of his mother, Alnita Mae Starick, 69, in her bedroom when he returned to their ransacked Jatko Road residence in Berry Creek about 3 a.m. on May 8.

The body of James Dale Starick, 71, was found by officers in a detached garage. Both victims were struck repeatedly in the head with what authorities

■ See **TRIAL, 7A**

BP finally stops oil spewing from Gulf gusher with carefully placed cap

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The oil has stopped. For now.

After 85 days and up to 184 million gallons, BP finally gained control over one of America's biggest environmental catastrophes Thursday by placing a carefully fitted cap over a runaway geyser that has been gushing crude into the Gulf of Mexico since early spring.

Though a temporary fix, the accomplishment was greeted with hope, high expectations — and, in many cases along the beleaguered coastline, disbelief. From one Gulf Coast resident came this: "Hallelujah." And from another: "I got to see it to believe it."

If the cap holds, if the sea floor doesn't crack and if the relief wells being prepared are completed successfully, this could be the beginning of the end for the spill. But that's a lot of ifs, and no one was declaring any sort of victory beyond the moment.

The oil stopped flowing at 3:25 p.m. EDT when the last of three valves in the 75-ton cap was slowly throttled shut. That set off a 48-hour watch period in which — much like



Associated Press

In this combo made from images taken from video provided by BP PLC, oil flows from two of three valves on the 75-ton cap atop the site of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico on Wednesday (left). Oil flows from one of three valves later Wednesday (center), and on Thursday oil no longer flows from the cap.

the hours immediately after a surgery — the patient was in stable, guarded condition and being watched closely for complications.

"It's a great sight," said BP Chief Operating Officer

Doug Suttles, who immediately urged caution. The flow, he said, could resume. "It's far from the finish line. ... It's

■ See **OIL, 7A**

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LOCAL WEATHER



Sunny and hot.
High: 106
Low: 72
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