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# Chicago Tribune

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FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2006

CHICAGOLAND

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Tribune photo by Geoffrey Black  
A close colleague of Del Close insists that this skull belongs to the comic. Others disagree.

## No bones about it: Comic got last laugh

Del Close put his heart into Chicago theater, but did he really put his skull into it too?

By Robert K. Elder  
Tribune staff reporter

Chicago comedy legend Del Close, a figure of infinite jest, loved practical jokes.

His last act—the donation of his cranium to the Goodman Theatre—was a masterpiece of skulduggery.

Or was it? The human skull purported to be Close's has become a legendary prop in Chicago theater and an endearing symbol of his eccentricities and offbeat humor. But it appears the mythic noggin is nothing more than that: a myth.

"It's not his skull, but the idea behind it is there," said Jeff Griggs, Close's biographer. "The idea should be preserved, if not the actual cranium."

Of Close's friends and colleagues interviewed this week, few said they believed, definitively, that it was Close's skull—only that they would like to believe it is. Some said they never bought the story.

The woman who said she arranged for the donation, however, steadfastly says the skull in question is Close's.

That skull now rests on red velvet cloth in a clear-plastic case in Goodman artistic director Robert Falls' office. The Tribune recently took detailed photos of the skull and showed them to experts.

The photos "made me laugh," said Anne Grauer, a paleopathologist.

PLEASE SEE SKULL, BACK PAGE

# Lawyers take aim at Daley

## He could become co-defendant in federal lawsuits over police torture

By Rudolph Bush and Carlos Sadovi  
Tribune staff reporters

A day after the release of a historic report on police torture, attorneys for four men who say their confessions were coerced served federal subpoenas on the special prosecutors Thursday, seeking records of Mayor

Richard Daley's testimony. Attorney Flint Taylor, who represents pardoned Death Row inmate Leroy Orange and convicted murderer Darrell Cannon, said he is pursuing the information as a first step toward naming Daley as a co-defendant in ongoing federal lawsuits against the city, prosecutors and police officers.

Daley was Cook County state's attorney during much of the period in which police torture took place, special prosecutor Edward Egan found. Egan's team interviewed Daley, and the report devoted three of its 290 pages to what Daley knew and did not know about the allegations.

Taylor's subpoena also fo-

cused on information obtained from Cook County State's Atty. Richard Devine, former Mayor Jane Byrne, former Police Supt. Richard Brzezczek and Cook County Judge William Kunkle.

Egan's long-awaited report found that for two decades, former Chicago Police Cmdr. Jon Burge and officers under him tortured criminal suspects into

making confessions. The allegations have been the subject of lawsuits and led to Burge's firing in 1993.

In 2003, Gov. George Ryan pardoned Orange and fellow Death Row inmates Madison Hobley, Stanley Howard and Aaron Patterson, citing evidence of

PLEASE SEE DALEY, BACK PAGE

### CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST



A wounded Israeli soldier is evacuated from fighting Thursday in southern Lebanon near the Israeli village of Avivim. Israelis face the difficult question of how to destroy Hezbollah's military capabilities without being drawn into a ground war.

AP photo by Ariel Schalit

# War's cost may limit

## Painful 18-year occupation makes Israelis wary of Lebanon invasion

By Joel Greenberg  
Tribune foreign correspondent

JERUSALEM — After nine days of a fierce air and artillery campaign against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, Israelis are weighing whether to press the offensive with troops on the ground, haunted by the lessons of a costly 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon that ended six years ago.

As they plan their next moves, the Israelis are facing the difficult question of how to destroy Hezbollah's military capabilities without being drawn into a ground war that could significantly increase army casualties.

It might also prolong the conflict at a time when international calls for a cease-fire are increasing.

The pitfalls of a ground cam-

### FULL COVERAGE

■ Two lines to MIDEAST ghgh gh gh. PAGE X

■ Two lines to HEZBOLLAH ghg hgh gh g. PAGE X

■ Local Muslims demand that U.S. call for ceasefire. METRO

paign were evident to the Israelis from the start.

After two Israeli soldiers were seized by Hezbollah last week—the event that triggered the offensive—an Israeli armored force crossed into Leba-

non and entered a lethal trap set by the militants. A tank was destroyed by a mine, and a rescue team was ambushed, leaving five soldiers dead.

Over the last two days, Israeli raids to destroy Hezbollah bunkers and rocket launchers in southern Lebanon near the border with Israel have led to heavy fighting. Four soldiers and an unknown number of guerrillas have been killed.

What began as an air war is taking on new dimensions, and as rocket attacks on northern Israel continue, Defense Min-

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By Virginia Groark  
Tribune staff reporter

Moments before a Metra train derailed last fall and killed two women, the engineer tried to radio the conductor but stopped after another crew member said the call was being broadcast over the public address system.

Engineer Michael Smith told investigators he tried to talk to the conductor for 8 or 10 seconds and then throttled the Rock Island District Line train up to 70 m.p.h. as he headed north to downtown Chicago, according to a transcript of a Jan. 19 interview, released Thursday by the National Transportation Safety Board.

"And nothing really out of the ordinary [happened] until I got to 47th Street, just happened to glance down and noticed that the crossover was lined for a diverging route," Smith said.

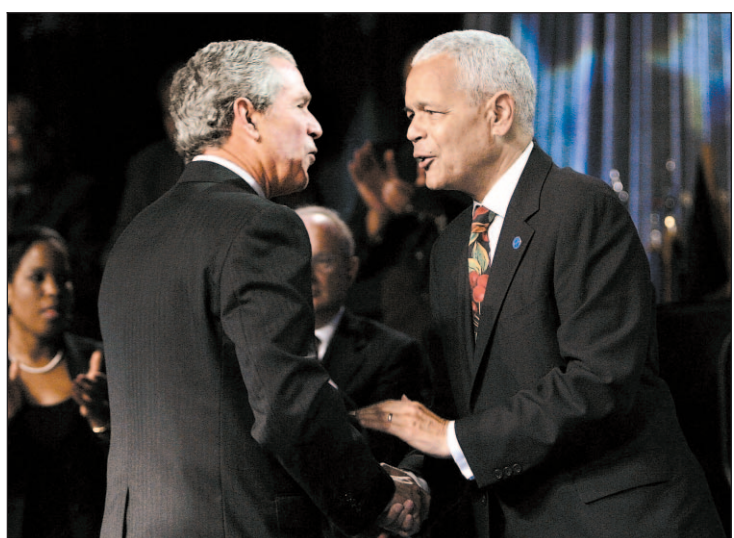
In the seconds that followed, a loud sound could be heard, and riders frantically tried to brace themselves as the train jumped off the tracks and swayed violently. One passenger reported that it felt like "we were getting dragged along the tracks." Coffee and cell phones flew into the air. Confused riders scrambled to evacuate. Some dialed 911 on cell phones.

The engineer's radio call, though unrelated to the derailment, could have distracted him from seeing the proper signals,

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*'I understand that racism still lingers in America. It's a lot easier to change a law than to change a human heart.'*

—President Bush, speaking at the NAACP convention



AP photo by Pablo Martinez  
President Bush is greeted by NAACP Chairman Julian Bond after addressing the rights group for the first time since taking office.

# Before NAACP, Bush calls rift with blacks 'a

By Mark Silva  
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—President Bush, making his first personal appearance before the NAACP as president, promised Thursday to sign a long-awaited renewal of the Voting Rights Act.

But it is the renewal of the president's frayed relations with the African-American community that weighs on the minds of Bush's aides these days—with midterm congressional elections nearing, the president's approval ratings sagging and his party's prospects in question.

And, judging from the reac-

tion of rank-and-file members of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization after Bush ended a five-year hiatus here, the president still has a long way to go.

"He's got a lot of good rhetoric—he makes people feel good," said Joyce Glaise, an NAACP member from Danville, Va. "But I think it was a good, intelligent group of African-Americans here who didn't bite into all the rhetoric. We're tired of the feel-good. We're way beyond that."

The president made one promise widely hailed here: extension for another 25 years of

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### INSIDE

#### NATION



Obama to make his 1st Iowa visit  
Senator will speak at high-profile Democratic event but tamps down speculation about 2008 White House bid. PAGE 3

#### OBITUARY

Former Mayor Daley's longtime press secretary dies  
Earl Bush famously told reporters about Richard J.: "Don't print what he said. Print what he meant." METRO



Weather: xxx; high xx, low xx  
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■ One line over two columns to VOTE. PAGE 18