

ESCAPE ROUTE

Good news for motorists trying to get off the Ryan



Humanities festival wraps on a high note



Chicago Tribune

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CHICAGOLAND

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A record return



Tribune photo by Scott Strazzante

Just as Nathan Vasher did last season, Devin Hester sprints toward the end zone with a record-tying 108-yard return of a missed field goal, highlighting the Bears' 38-20 victory over the New York Giants on

Sunday night. Rex Grossman got back on track with three TD passes, and the defense stiffened after some shoddy early play. And the Bears, now 8-1, won the first game of a pivotal three-game East Coast swing.

BEARS WATCHING

At the airport, football die-hards root for flight delays. METRO

COMPLETE COVERAGE IN SPECIAL SECTION, WHICH WRAPS SPORTS

Flush with cash in Venezuela

Fueled by gushing oil revenue, easy credit and social spending by the Chavez regime, a wave of prosperity creates a new elite

By Gary Marx
Tribune foreign correspondent

CARACAS, Venezuela—Manuel Rodríguez was walking through his neighborhood on a recent Saturday when he passed a Harley-Davidson showroom.

Rodríguez ducked inside, got on several gleaming motorcycles and within minutes was negotiating with a dealer to purchase two Harley-Davidson Road Kings—one for himself and another for his 30-year-old son. The total price: \$57,000.

"It's unbelievable. What a bike!" said the 57-year-old factory owner. "I've always wanted to have one before I turned 60."

Like many Venezuelans, Rodríguez is flush with cash as this South American country rides an unprecedented wave of prosperity fueled by high oil prices, cheap credit and massive government spending that has created a new elite and bolstered President Hugo Chavez's popularity less than a month before he seeks re-election.

From a \$50,000 Hummer to a

\$500 Dolce & Gabbana cell phone to a \$10 glass of Buchanan's 18-year-old Scotch whiskey, Venezuelans are spending money like never before as the economy grows at a 9 percent clip this year.

Car sales are up 70 percent the past 12 months in a nation where gasoline runs about 18 cents a gallon, and the Venezuelan stock market has soared 70 percent since January. Housing prices in Caracas have tripled

PLEASE SEE VENEZUELA, PAGE 21

'Fresh' look for Iraq has some limits

President firm on goals; day's death toll reaches 159

By Mark Silva
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration stands "ready to make course adjustments" with the war in Iraq, the White House said Sunday, while insisting that the president remains committed to his vision of success there.

The administration's assurances came as violence rose to a height unusual even by Iraq's standards. At least 159 people were reported killed, including 35 in suicide bombings at a police recruiting station in Baghdad and 75 whose bodies were dumped in the capital and Baqouba.

As President Bush prepares to meet Monday with a bipartisan panel commissioned by

Morgues in Iraqi capital run out of room. PAGE 9

Congress to examine the situation in Iraq, and as military leaders undertake their own review of admittedly failing policies in Iraq, the administration is voicing a willingness to take a "fresh approach" toward the war.

Yet after elections that handed the Democratic Party control of Congress and with a growing chorus of leaders in both parties calling for a new course, if not a phased withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, the president insists he will pursue an unwavering policy of achieving success there—which he defines as an Iraqi government that can "sustain and defend itself."

"We clearly need a fresh approach," Joshua Bolten, the president's chief of staff, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." "You

PLEASE SEE POLICY, PAGE 8

Bishops may alter language on gays

Baptism urged for kids of same-sex parents

By Manya A. Brachear
Tribune staff reporter

While continuing to stress that same-sex relationships are immoral, America's Roman Catholic bishops may approve new guidelines this week that absolve gay Catholics of any obligation to try to alter their sexual orientation.

The guidelines for ministering to homosexuals, to be reviewed when bishops convene Monday in Baltimore for their annual fall meeting, also will urge clergy to baptize the adopted children of gay couples who agree to raise them Catholic.

"We are trying to find a language that does not betray the



Tribune photo by José Moré

Cardinal Francis George will be in Baltimore Monday as a meeting of bishops convenes.

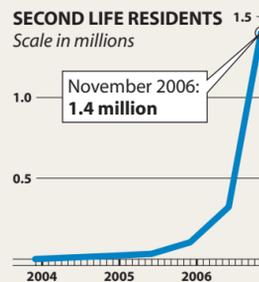
teaching of the church, but will perhaps express it in ways that are not so offensive," Chicago's Cardinal Francis George, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in an interview last week.

"The conclusions are the same," George said. "The language will be less painful than

PLEASE SEE BISHOPS, PAGE 2

1.4 million get a virtual life

A guide to the world of Second Life



Getting there: Joining Second Life is free after downloading the company's software from www.secondlife.com. An upgrade costs \$9.95 for the right to build objects and purchase property.

Median age: 32

Sex: In-world residents are typically 57 percent male.

Currency: Linden dollars (L\$257* = \$1 U.S.)

Transportation: None needed. Residents can either fly or teleport, "Star Trek"-style, any place they like.

Etiquette: Be nice. Most Second Life areas are labeled "Safe," meaning no violence, no indecency or harassment. Violations typically result in a warning, followed by suspension and the permanent boot for repeat offenders.

Crime: Even Second Life has shady characters. Don't give your password to anyone. As for casinos and con artists, a fool and his Linden dollars are soon parted.

Where to go: Check out the boutiques in Midnight City and singer/songwriter Regina Spektor's listening loft. Or type your interests into the "search" bar, hit "teleport" and explore.

Source: Linden Lab * As of Sunday

Site attracts 'residents' who meet, learn and even spend real money

By Robert K. Elder
Tribune staff reporter

SAN FRANCISCO — If the virtual world of Second Life has a Mt. Olympus, the place where gods flex their power and influence, it's here at parent company Linden Lab.

That makes Linden Lab Chief Executive Officer Philip Rosedale a Zeus-like figure. From an open, cubicle-free office near Telegraph Hill, Rosedale oversees 1.4 million "residents" of Second Life's 3-D, online world of commerce, information and social networking.

And Second Life could be headed for Next Big Thing status.

Think of it as MySpace meets "The Matrix," where players create alternative reality versions of themselves and then live out their new, digital lives



Photo for the Tribune by John Lee

Linden Lab CEO Philip Rosedale shows his punk alter ego in Second Life; in real life, he has created a very successful business.

Meet Second Life users and their virtual alter egos. PAGE 12

online amid 26,000 virtual acres of islands, casinos, shopping districts, libraries and universities. They make and visit friends, have sex and get married. They can build a house, test drive a car or buy virtual

goods for actual money.

Residents craft elaborate "avatars"—or animated alter egos—and spend Linden dollars (L\$257 = \$1 U.S.) to outfit themselves with wings, designer outfits and associated bling.

Hundreds of thousands of real dollars are spent every day, including \$605,000 in one 24-hour

PLEASE SEE VIRTUAL, PAGE 12

INSIDE

SPORTS

Ramirez, Wood stay in Cubs' fold
Third baseman accepts 'hometown discount' in 5-year pact; righty signs 1-year deal as reliever.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE HOLIDAY GIVING

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the coupon

in SPORTS



Weather: Cloudy; high 47, low 35
COMPLETE INDEX, PAGE 2
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