

Herald & Review

Tuesday

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Peace, love and war: The 1960s were a time of extremes, of tragic assassinations and Peace Corps ideals, brutal war and peaceful love-ins. The decade began with the election of John F. Kennedy, who ushered in an era of youthful idealism, only to be cut down three years later. The decade ended with man's landing on the moon.

1960-1969 / A7

Governor carries gun fight to opponents' back yards

GOP senators say campaign won't win more votes for Safe Neighborhoods Act provision.

By MIKE ROBINSON
Associated Press Writer

CHICAGO — Gov. George H. Ryan launched a campaign Monday aimed at winning converts among GOP state senators who have stalled legislation

that would make it a felony to carry a gun without a permit. The Republican governor had Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood and three department heads out stumping for the plan from Galesburg to Rockford. But lawmakers said Ryan apparently wasn't mustering enough fresh support to win passage of the bill when the state Senate meets in special session again on Wednesday. "He can fly around the state four or

five times and it's not going to change," Sen. Wendell Jones, R-Pulaski, said as the governor's supporters took their campaign into the legislative districts of the bill's critics. Ryan planned to take to the stump himself today, starting with a news conference at a Chicago police station with Mayor Richard M. Daley. Ryan's followers acknowledged, however, that they weren't even certain that the leader of the opposition

to the bill, Republican Senate President James "Pete" Philip, would bring it to the floor for a vote on Wednesday.

"It's time for all of us to give a very clear message to our state senators to call Sen. Pete Philip and ask him to call the Safe Neighborhoods Act on Wednesday," Public Health Director

RYAN
Continued on A5



Ryan
Plans news conference today

Quick Take Scores

Boys

- Argenta-Oreana 52
- Central Catholic 50
- Meridian 89
- St. Teresa 56

Girls

- Olney 68
- Mount Zion 38
- Monticello 62
- Bernett 33

Details, more pages / B1, A5

In the ring

Eddie Freeman Jr. got a special present from the Pacyna family this year: a berth in the regional Silver Gloves tournament.

Sports / B1

Party down

Central Illinois offers a wealth of activities for New Year's Eve, from Decatur's daylong festival at the Civic Center, to a retro 'Soda Pop Hop' at the Douglas County Museum.

Central Illinois / A3

Don't panic

With Christmas behind us, all eyes are on the New Year, with the Y2K bug looming in the background. Our advice: Be prepared, but don't overreact.

Opinion / A8

Lottery

Here are the winning numbers Monday in the Illinois State Lottery.

- Pick Three-Midday: 1-4-3
- Pick Three-Evening: 4-9-2
- Pick Four-Midday: 7-2-6-7
- Pick Four-Evening: 5-1-1-9
- Little Lotto: 4-10-12-17-24
- Lotto jackpot: \$12 million
- Big Game jackpot: \$37 million

Weather

Today: Partly cloudy, High 39.
Tonight: Partly cloudy, Low 26.

Details / B8

Inside

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countdown:



4
Celebrate 2000
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Anchor Daniels Midland Co.
Decatur Memorial Hospital
Illness Power Co.
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Our 120th year
Issue 362 • Four sections
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EXPULSION CONTROVERSY

PUSH lawyers grill Arndt

School chief spends six hours testifying in zero-tolerance lawsuit.

By TOM COLLINS
Herald Staff Writer

URBANA — Despite a list of at least two dozen witnesses — and just two more days to question them — lawyers for the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition



Arndt
Returns to stand today

spent Monday questioning a lone witness in its lawsuit against the Decatur School District. Superintendent Kenneth Arndt spent more than six hours on the stand in U.S. District Court describing how and why the Decatur school board expelled six students for two years following a Sept. 17 fight at Eisenhower High School. A seventh student was allowed to withdraw before the board took action on a recommendation to expel him.

Those expulsions ignited a nationwide controversy on school discipline and caught the eye of civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, who succeeded in getting the students enrolled in alternative schools.

Jackson also has led six of the seven students in a federal lawsuit to overturn the expulsions and invalidate the district's so-called "zero tolerance policy." The case is being heard this week by U.S. District Judge Michael McCuskey.

During opening arguments, Lewis Myers Jr.,



Herald & Review photo/Kathy J. Huff

EVIDENCE: An attorney for the Decatur School District carries stills from the videotape of the September fight at Eisenhower High School into the U.S. Federal Courthouse on Monday in Urbana.

lawyer for the students and Rainbow/PUSH, said the board's "no tolerance" resolution on violence had turned it into a "de facto policy" with no safeguards for student rights.

Specifically, Myers said the board — in a knee-jerk reaction to the shooting at Columbine High School — failed to settle the cases individually, applied ill-defined charges of "gang-related activity" and imposed excessive punishments.

Myers then called Arndt to the stand and painstakingly quizzed him about the expulsion protocol used by the board. According to Arndt, the district retains an independent hearing officer — in this case, David Cooper, former regional superintendent for Macon and Platt counties — to hear evidence and testimony.

Arndt said the board used limited criteria in deciding whether suspension or



BACK IN COURT: The Rev. Jesse Jackson answers questions Monday at the U.S. Federal Courthouse in Urbana as he makes himself available to testify.

LAWSUIT
Continued on A6

Defendants plead their own cases

Some call Macon County public defenders incompetent and the court system racist.

By TOM COLLINS
Herald Staff Writer

DECATUR — The two men at the hardwood table politely stand when Macon County Circuit Judge Jerry L. Patton enters the court.

On the left: Public Defender Jon Baxter, clad in a suit and tie. On the right: murder defendant Montell Johnson, wearing an orange jail jumpsuit and manacles on his feet.

Usually, it is the lawyer who addresses the judge. With a nod to the court reporter, judges like to remind talkative defendants that their words can, and will, be used against them.

Usually, that is. In People vs. Montell Johnson, it is Johnson who addresses and responds to the bench. Baxter merely sits and listens, there to answer questions from Johnson.

Johnson is representing himself — pro se, in legal jargon — and has no law degree. He is, however, convinced of his innocence in the killing of Dorianne Wansley.

"If I had committed this crime, I would have pleaded guilty and accepted capital punishment," Johnson said during an interview at the Macon County Jail. Johnson said he once ran with the Los Angeles-based CIGs gang and "at that time, I believed in the criminal life."

"It wouldn't bother me to face capital punishment for something I believed in," he said.

He is taking an awful risk. Though a life free of prison bars is lost — he was sentenced to natural life in California — a murder conviction in Macon County could mean a trip to death row.

Yet Johnson has his reasons. Right or wrong, he's convinced the justice system

DEFENDANTS
Continued on A4

Decent weather expected for New Year

By SUSAN REDDY
Herald Staff Writer

DECATUR — It doesn't appear Mother Nature will play a leading role in any New Year's activities.

No snow or ice storms are predicted for the last day of 1999 or the first of the new year, according to the National Weather Service in Lincoln.

"There are no indications of anything exciting happening. It's fairly common weather," said Mike Lewis, meteorological technician. "A warming trend will be coming that will be short-lived, and then we're back to more seasonal weather again."

The outlook is far different from last year, when 13 inches of snow fell in Decatur from New Year's Eve to Jan. 3, according to statistics from the Midwestern Climate Center in Champaign.

For several days, activity was at a standstill. Multiple deaths related to the cold and snow shoveling were reported. Roads were closed and flights were canceled, stranding many people in the Midwest. Illinois Power Co. says it's prepared to handle

any weather- or Y2K-related outages. The company has been working since 1996 to ensure the date rollover from 1999 to 2000 — which some computers won't be able to make — will not affect its delivery of electricity and natural gas.

Still, federal agencies recommend people take steps to prepare for outages, whatever their reason. Temperatures on Wednesday and Thursday will be about 10 degrees above normal, with highs in the upper 40s and lows in the upper 20s and low 30s. This time of year, temperatures normally hover in the 20s to 30s.

A shift in the jet stream will allow more of a westerly and southerly flow of air, which will bring higher temperatures, Lewis said.

The expected high temperature on New Year's Eve is 30 to 35 degrees. Highs on the first two days of 2000 are expected to be in the upper 20s and low 30s.

Illinois Power spokesman Steve Stengel said the weather, not Y2K-related issues, would be the likely cause of any outages this weekend.

Y2K
Continued on A6

Monday, December 27

COMMENTARY

Greetings from Ft. Lauderdale!

Don't you hate it when the air conditioner in the rental car gets stuck on high and flags the windows so you can hardly see the palm trees? Don't you hate that?

And don't you hate it when the front from the warm ocean washes up on your good shoes and the sand from the beach gets all over your floor mats? Don't you hate that?

But I sat out for your pity here in the heat of 73-degree sun, alone, shivering under and Don Shula's Steakhouse. I ask only for someone to jump out to the airport and wash my car, which, when I last drove, looked something like a frozen beige bar.

A kid at the hotel's front desk stopped by, towel draped over his tan shoulders, to complain about the temperature of the swimming pool. "It's only 65 degrees," he said in a voice. "Don't you hate that?" Tough crowd here at the Micropop.com Bowl.

More tomorrow, Mark

More coverage / B1