

the Napa Valley Register

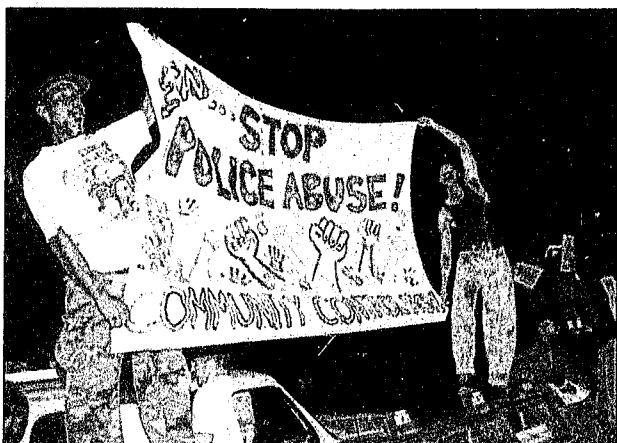
Home Delivery 27 Cents a Day

129th Year No. 264 Thursday, April 30, 1992 35 Cents



Country music awards
Showman Garth Brooks and lanky Alan Jackson each took home two top prizes from the annual Academy of Country Music awards presentation Wednesday. See Page 15

Demonstrators gather in front of the Los Angeles Police Department to protest the acquittal of four police officers charged with the beating of motorist Rodney King.



AP LASERPHOTO

"We are doing exactly what angered us so much. But it's hard, because I can't tell people how to channel their anger, anymore."

Desiree Young
Inglewood resident



Angry protesters destroy a police car in the civic center area of Los Angeles late Wednesday night.

AP LASERPHOTO

At least nine dead in LA

Innocent verdicts in beating trial spark riot

By LINDA DEUTSCH
Associated Press Writer
LOS ANGELES - Arson and looting erupted again today after a night of violence that killed nine people in a convulsion of rage over the acquittal of four white policemen in the beating of black motorist Rodney King.

Police formed a line to protect one side of a battered store from a crowd as looters hauled goods out an unprotected rear door. Elsewhere, looters were chased out of stores but returned when officers moved on.

Mayor Tom Bradley went on television to declare a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the violence-stricken area and restrict sales of ammunition and gasoline.

Hundreds of fires burned overnight and 30 still blazed as morning revealed gutted structures, smoldering hulks of vehicles and trashed stores, mainly in the South Central area.

Three fires broke out each minute between midnight and 3 a.m., Fire Chief Donald Manning said in a grim news conference where he recounted attacks on his "overwhelmed" force. One firefighter was wounded by gunfire.

"We had numerous occasions when there were attempts to kill firefighters. They tried to kill them with axes. They tried to kill them with gunshots," Manning said.

Bradley said injuries totaled 192. Police spokesman Bill Frio said he believed more than 300 people were arrested but a reliable number was unavailable.

In addition to nine deaths, two injured people were hospitalized in grave condition "and may not survive," said Lt. John Dunkin.

The 300-plus fires torched homes, stand alone stores and major shopping malls, said Fire Department spokesman Phil Weireter. South Central was hardest hit, but other blazes broke out as far away as the Fairfax area and San Fernando Valley.

Police Chief Daryl Gates, asked why it took more than an hour for officers to get to Wednesday's first



AP LASERPHOTO

With a kiosk burning in the background a protestor outside the Parker Center holds a sign which states, "We Will Not Rest."

trouble scene, said his forces were quickly overwhelmed, and it took time to gather other resources. He also said he didn't want it to appear that police were overreacting at the outset.

Many of the burned stores had Korean names. Relations between Korean merchants and their black customers have been tense because of several violent incidents. One barely damaged store bore a sign declaring "Black Owned."

Hundreds of state Highway Patrol officers were sent to bolster the city's police force and 2,000 National Guard troops were placed on standby.

The University of Southern California postponed exams scheduled for Thursday and urged faculty, students and staff to stay home.

The outbreak of shootings, beatings, arson and looting that exploded Wednesday evening was the worst civil disorder in Los Angeles since the 1965 Watts riots in which 34 people were killed.

The heavily minority South Central area...

See RIOTING, Page 4

'Thin blue line' sways the jury

By LINDA DEUTSCH
Associated Press Writer
SIMI VALLEY - The jury that acquitted four Los Angeles policemen in the Rodney King beating heeded defense lawyers' warnings that police are "the thin blue line" separating the law-abiding from the lawless.

The lack of testimony from King and the transfer of the trial from ethnically diverse Los Angeles to Simi Valley, a predominantly white suburb known as a bedroom community for police, may have tipped the scales toward the defense.

Only six blacks were among 400 prospects summoned for jury duty. Two blacks who made it into the jury box were removed by defense challenges.

King is black; the four officers white.

In powerful closing arguments, defense lawyers portrayed their clients as guardians of an endan-

Analysis

gered society.

Defense lawyer Michael Stone, a former policeman, recalled a sign in a police gymnasium: "There are no second-place ribbons in a street fight."

"These officers, these defendants, do not get paid to lose a street fight," he argued. "They do not get paid to roll around in the dirt with the likes of Rodney Glen King."

"That's not their job. That's not their duty," he said. "And if we as members of the community demand they do that, the thin blue line that separates the law-abiding and the not law-abiding will disintegrate."

The prosecution asked jurors to trust their own eyes, relying on the videotape shot by a neighborhood resident to show that the clubbing

and kicking of King was unnecessary, unreasonable force.

King, a convicted robber, was not called by either side as a witness. Prosecutors have said the tape spoke for itself.

"Had King been able to talk to us, the video might have been looked at differently," a juror who demanded anonymity was quoted as saying on ABC's "Nightline."

Defense lawyers played the tape so many times at so many different speeds that its impact may have been blunted. And they offered enough explanations for what it showed to provide reasonable doubt.

Defense experts said the four did what they were trained to do: inflict pain and break bones with their batons if necessary.

Two officers said they believed King was "dusted," or under the

See ANALYSIS, Page 4

Locals sent south to help bolster forces

From Register Staff
California Highway Patrol personnel will be stretched a little thin in the Napa area until the crisis settles down because eight uniform patrol officers, plus two high-ranking Napa officers, have been dispatched to Los Angeles.

Officer Warren Bullis said Capt. Bob Tindel, Sgt. Howie Broxton and eight traffic officers have been sent to keep order.

In all, 200 officers from the Golden Gate Division, which covers the Bay Area, have been dispatched.

Calistoga Police Chief James Anderson, a National Guard officer, was mobilized and sent to Southern California Wednesday night.

Calistoga City Administrator John Bahorski said it appears to be the city's week for helping other areas in distress. Office of Emergency Services Coordinator Bob Schneider was sent to Humboldt County Monday to aid earthquake relief efforts.

Meanwhile, reactions to the verdict in the Rodney King beating trial from area court personnel were decidedly circumspect. Most declined to comment publicly; those who did insisted on anonymity.

"I was upset when I heard about it. I thought the video was very obvious," said one court worker.

However, in a comment that surfaced repeatedly among court and prosecution personnel:

"I'm sure there were probably other things presented in court that we didn't know about. Everyone is a Monday morning quarterback. Unless you're chosen as a juror, you don't really know what's going on."

Other personnel added they felt the Los Angeles riots would not accomplish anything.

Perhaps not surprisingly, stronger comments on the verdict came from a deputy public defender who also declined to be named.

"It's horrible. It's awful," said the defender. "We all saw it on the videotape - a guy helpless on the ground being beaten repeatedly."

"The argument that (the officers) were just doing their job is very hard to swallow."

Becerra to stand trial for rape, murder

Defense says where's the evidence?

By LESLIE WEINFELD
Register Staff Writer
Anthony A. Becerra Jr. will stand trial on all charges against him, including the alleged murder of a local department store clerk that could bring the death penalty, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Attorneys on both sides made spirited closing arguments Wednesday to end a four-day preliminary hearing on whether sufficient evidence exists to try the 23-year-old Napan in Superior Court.

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bring Becerra the death penalty or a life prison term.

Among the special circumstances listed in the California Penal Code is the commission of murder in the course of an alleged rape, robbery or kidnapping.

Scott LeStrange, chief deputy district attorney, argued that "the evidence shows not only first degree murder, but the flat out execution of another human being by this defendant."

Defense co-counsel Terry Rob-

ertson of Napa said LeStrange's words were "inflammatory" and meant solely to distract from a sketchy case that doesn't answer some major questions.

There is barely enough evidence to connect Becerra with charges of car theft - which was not necessarily connected to Courtright's death - and evading arrest once police spotted the car, Robertson said.

Without belittling the victim's death, "There are further questions to be asked," he said. "We don't know who killed Kay Courtright. There is not enough (evidence) to bolster what might be a second senseless death."

Prosecutor LeStrange said the evidence indicated a circumstantial path leading directly to Becerra.

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Investigators find trail of de Monet family strife

By JACK KATZANEK
Register Staff Writer

The Napa address of millionaire developer Joaquin de Monet was mysteriously found in the home of his former brother-in-law some six weeks before de Monet's mansion exploded this week, according to sheriff's department reports.

The discovery of the address on March 13 in a Placer County residence was passed along to de Monet, who was concerned and thought it was suspicious enough to contact the Napa County Sheriff's Department, on March 14.

The phone number of de Monet's ex-wife Gail was also found in the house by her sister, Sue

Badoni, the Register has learned.

According to Napa County Sheriff's Department Det. Mike Collins, Sue and John Badoni are going through a divorce. When she entered her estranged husband's home on March 13, she found de Monet's Old Soda Springs Road address and Gail de Monet's phone number written down.

"She felt it was strange," Collins said. "Why should he have Joaquin's address? She thought it was odd he would have Gail's phone number, too."

Collins said de Monet did not report the discovery of the ad-

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ORIGINAL DEFECTIVE