

TUESDAY

National bottle bill

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Champs again

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Harding prolonged his agony by not holding breath, officials say

By Joe Salkowski

The Arizona Daily Star

Don Eugene Harding's executioners expected him to die quickly and quietly in the state's gas chamber after a brief attempt to hold his breath. But Harding yesterday spent more than six torturous minutes gasping and straining at the nylon straps holding him to his chair, a struggle that occurred because he failed to hold his breath, a prison spokesman said. "We all believed the inmate, like what has happened apparently in the past, would hold his breath for as long as he could — holding on to the last moments of life," said Mike Arra, spokesman for the Arizona Department of Corrections and a witness to the execution. "Because of that, he would ultimately take a very deep breath that would cause such an impact he would pass out," Arra said. "But Harding apparently took small, sniffling kinds of breaths when the gas was released," he said. Harding's ensuing struggle surprised prison officials, most of whom had never before witnessed an execution, Arra said. "It wasn't a pretty picture, and it was somewhat beyond what many of us had expected," he said. "In our mind, we had other pictures or impressions we got from old-timers who were around for the executions in the '50s and '60s." This execution — the first in Arizona since Manuel Silva was put to death in 1963 — evoked a wide range of responses from the public officials, media representatives and others who witnessed the event. Some, including death penalty opponent Donna Hamm, described it as a brutal act that should never have happened. "What I witnessed last night was heinous and torturous," said Hamm, a Tempe resident and director of a prisoner-advocacy group called Middle Ground. "The effects of strapping a man in a chair, almost naked, and throwing together chemicals to suffocate him — that is a hideous death," she said. "My overwhelming feeling last night, after all the other emotions, was embarrassment for my fellow man, and shame." Florence Police Chief Tom Rankin, though, said Harding deserved to suffer for brutally killing nine men, Martin Concannon and Robert Wise at a Tucson motel 12 years ago. He was also convicted of killing a man a day earlier in a Phoenix motel and was linked to at least three other slayings, one in Arkansas and two in California. "I wasn't concerned about whether Don Harding was holding his breath," he said. See HARDING, Page 2A

A toxic haze, a gesture, then death

By Chris Limberts

The Arizona Daily Star

FLORENCE — Prison guards entered his stark cage shortly before midnight Sunday and stripped Don Eugene Harding to his shorts. Three electrodes were attached to Harding, two above his breasts and another on his rib cage. Two guards led Harding the few feet to the gas chamber. Harding did not fight, and he did not stow. But he did not help. He moved slowly. Sam Lewis, the director of the Department of Corrections, approached Harding and asked if he had any last words. Harding answered "No," said prison spokesman Mike Arra. Harding's appeals, including the rapid telephonic pleas for a stay to four courts, were denied. He was strapped into the perforated black metal chair. Harding waited. He wanted to suffocate and to become the first person to die in Arizona's gas chamber in more than 29 years. He wanted to die, for brutally murdering two salesmen in a Tucson motel 12 years ago. The four-person execution team, referred to yesterday as the "special operations team," waited to prepare the poison Harding would breathe. At about the same time, nine media witnesses walked down flower-lined paths to the death house. As the group passed Cell Block 4 a whistle was heard, then another, then laughter and shrieks. The witnesses drew numbers for their seats in the sterile, blue-and-gray observation room. Venetian blinds covered the three windows into the gas chamber. Harding could not be seen. Lewis walked into the witness room to announce that he had co-

See SCENE, Page 2A



A tank and a soldier guard Peru's Palace of Justice after the constitution was suspended.

Politicians beaten, media censored as Peru fights inflation, insurgents

By Kevin Galvin

The Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — The military and President Alberto Fujimori shut down magazines and radio stations and detained opposition politicians yesterday after suspending the constitution and sending tanks to surround Congress. Fujimori justified the state of emergency, saying legislative and judicial corruption were stalling his efforts to rouse Peru from a deep recession and combat a 12-year-old guerrilla insurgency that has shifted from mountain strongholds to Lima shantytowns. The United States called Fujimori's state of emergency declaration "regrettable" and cut aid to Peru. Latin American leaders, fearing a return to dictatorship after a decade of democratization in the region, con-

demned the move as a "classic coup." Soldiers halted cars and searched civilians on Lima's outskirts and patrolled in force downtown. Parliamentary leaders were under house arrest, and former President Alan Garcia went into hiding. At Fujimori swore in three new Cabinet members at the presidential palace, across town lawmakers gathered but were kept from entering a hall by soldiers. A congressman slapped a soldier, and a tear gas grenade was fired into the crowd. Sen. Raul Ferrero rushed forward and was beaten down with nightsticks. Other lawmakers moved to help him up, and another politician was hit. Police fired into the crowd. See PERU, Page 2A

City Council reverses itself on prison vote

By Joe Burchell

The Arizona Daily Star

The City Council reversed itself last night, voting 5-2 to lease 50 acres southeast of Tucson for a private prison to hold up to 1,000 illegal aliens. The council also approved donating the \$155,000 a year the city collects in lease payments to an organization that provides legal services to immigrants and Naturalization Service detainees. The donation for legal services was made in an effort to placate opponents, who said the city should not assist in the continued wrongful detention and mistreatment of illegal aliens. Two weeks ago the all-Democratic council voted 5-2 to reject the lease with Dominick Leasing of Oklahoma and the Community Finance Corp., a subsidiary of the city-created Tucson Local Development Corp., for 50 acres next to the state prison on South Wilcox Road. Since then, the council has come under heavy criticism from some business leaders for supporting the 300 jobs and \$6.5 million payroll the prison promises to provide. Recall petitions have been taken. See COUNCIL, Page 4A

Injection bill gains support after execution

By Mary K. Reinhardt

The Arizona Daily Star

PHOENIX — Don Harding's death in Arizona's gas chamber yesterday increased support for a bill that would make lethal injection the state's capital punishment method. Also, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 5-4 to prohibit the death penalty for the mentally retarded and those who were under the age of 18 when they committed their crimes. Voters would have the last say on the capital punishment method, since the Arizona Constitution requires death by gas chamber and it takes a statewide vote to amend the constitution. Rep. Leta Stetey, R-Mesa, said "there is a groundswell" of support among legislators for House Concurrent Resolution 2002, because of Harding's rather gruesome death. "Witnesses said Harding turned 'beet red' and went into convulsions for several minutes before he died. "That's not the reason for capital punishment," Stetey said. "The reason is to keep them from killing again and to deter crime. It does not mean that we have to inflict an atrocity on them." See INJECTION, Page 2A

WEATHER



Mostly sunny. Today is expected to be mostly sunny and warm with northwest winds of 5 to 10 mph. Look for a high from 79 to 84 degrees. Fair tonight with a low from 48 to 53. Yesterday's high was 83, and the low 51. Details on Page 11A.

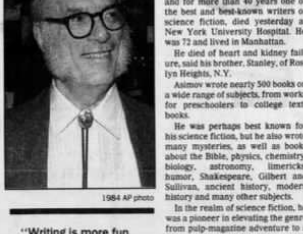
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\$1-million casino heist Running for cover. Gamblers at the Stardust casino in Las Vegas run through the kitchen and hide behind tables when two armed men take \$1 million in cash and checks from an armored car guard. Page 1A.
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Science-fiction pioneer Isaac Asimov dies at 72

By Mervyn Rothstein

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Isaac Asimov, the pre-eminent popular-science writer of the day and for more than 40 years one of the best and best-known writers of science fiction, died yesterday at New York University Hospital. He was 72 and lived in Manhattan. He died of heart and kidney failure, said his brother, Stanley, of Roslyn Heights, N.Y. Asimov wrote nearly 500 books on a wide range of subjects, from works for preschoolers to college textbooks. He was perhaps best known for his science fiction, but he also wrote many mysteries, as well as books about the Bible, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, linguistics, humor, Shakespeare, Gilbert and Sullivan, ancient history, modern history and many other subjects. In the realm of science fiction, he was a pioneer in elevating the genre from pulp-magazine adventure to a more intellectual level that dealt with sociology, history, mathematics and science. Asimov's first book, "Pebble in the Sky," a science-fiction novel, was published in 1950. His first 199 See ASIMOV, Page 4A



Douglas Knotts, The Arizona Daily Star

Life goes on — spectacularly In 1987, lightning caused a fire that burned 5,000 acres in the Bear Canyon area of the Catalinas and left nothing but a huge black scar on the land. But it wasn't the end of plant life there — not by a long shot. The flowers are back with a vengeance. Story, Page 1B.