



Pitt plays at 11 a.m. today — C1

Cooks whip up holiday gifts — B1

Valley News Dispatch

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The voice of the Valley for 114 years

50¢

Briefly



Staff photo

Drained of cash

Lifeguard Calvin Carter gives pointers to Kyrene Haynes, 9, at Freeport Area Community Pool in this 2001 file photo. On Thursday, the pool's seven-member operating board decided Thursday to indefinitely close the 41-year-old pool, citing a lack of money and interested people.

Story on Page A3

Speeding in school zone could cost you

A bill awaiting Gov. Ed Rendell's signature would raise the fine for speeding through a school zone to as much as \$500, making it one of the toughest such laws in the nation.

Story on Page A8

Restaurant serves up snap, crackle, pop

Cereality Cereal Bar & Cafe is dishing out all kinds of cereal — 30 brands — with 36 toppings, plus regular, flavored or soy milk for \$2.95. Customers are, shall we say, bowlled over.

Story on Page A10

Today's obituaries

- Frank A. Ausk Sr., 83, West Leechburg
- Peter A. DuBac, 76, New Kensington
- Earl L. Dunlap, 80, Harrison
- Izetta Owens, 92, Apollo
- Christine Shaw, 62, formerly of New Kensington
- Harry V. Sproull, 78, formerly of New Kensington
- John H. Streblick Sr., 82, Tarentum

Late deaths

- Robert L. Baker, 79, West Deer. Duster Funeral Home Inc., Tarentum. 724-224-1526.
- Carvell F. McKeever, 76, formerly of Saltsburg. Curran Funeral Home, Saltsburg. 724-639-3911.

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Basketball opens with Burrell-Valley thriller

By Bill Beckner Jr.
Staff writer

No matter what the sport or where the game is played, most Valley-Burrell games aren't over until the final buzzer sounds.

That was the case again Friday night as the Alle-Kiski Valley rivals opened the high school basketball season with another down-to-the-wire matchup.

Burrell saw a nine-point lead dwindle to two points with 14.3 seconds to play before hanging on for a 56-51

Inside

• Tournaments tip off the season — Pages C1, 3, 4

victory over the Vikings in the boys Greensburg Central Catholic Tip-off Classic.

Other highlights:

- Ford City guard Lizzie Suwala opened her senior season with a career-high and school single-season record 43 points in a 56-54, triple-overtime win over Ambridge in the Kittanning tournament.
- Knoch's Jordan Shoop hit

a 3-pointer with seven seconds left to lift the Knights over Sewickley Academy, 57-54, in the Moon boys tournament.

• New Leechburg boys coach Damian Davies picked up a win in his debut as the Blue Devils blew past Apollo-Ridge, 73-40, in the Leechburg tournament.

• All three local Quad-A boys teams won their openers — Kiski Area, 55-49, in double-overtime over McGuffey; Plum, 51-50, over Hempfield; and Fox Chapel, 45-38, over Monessen.

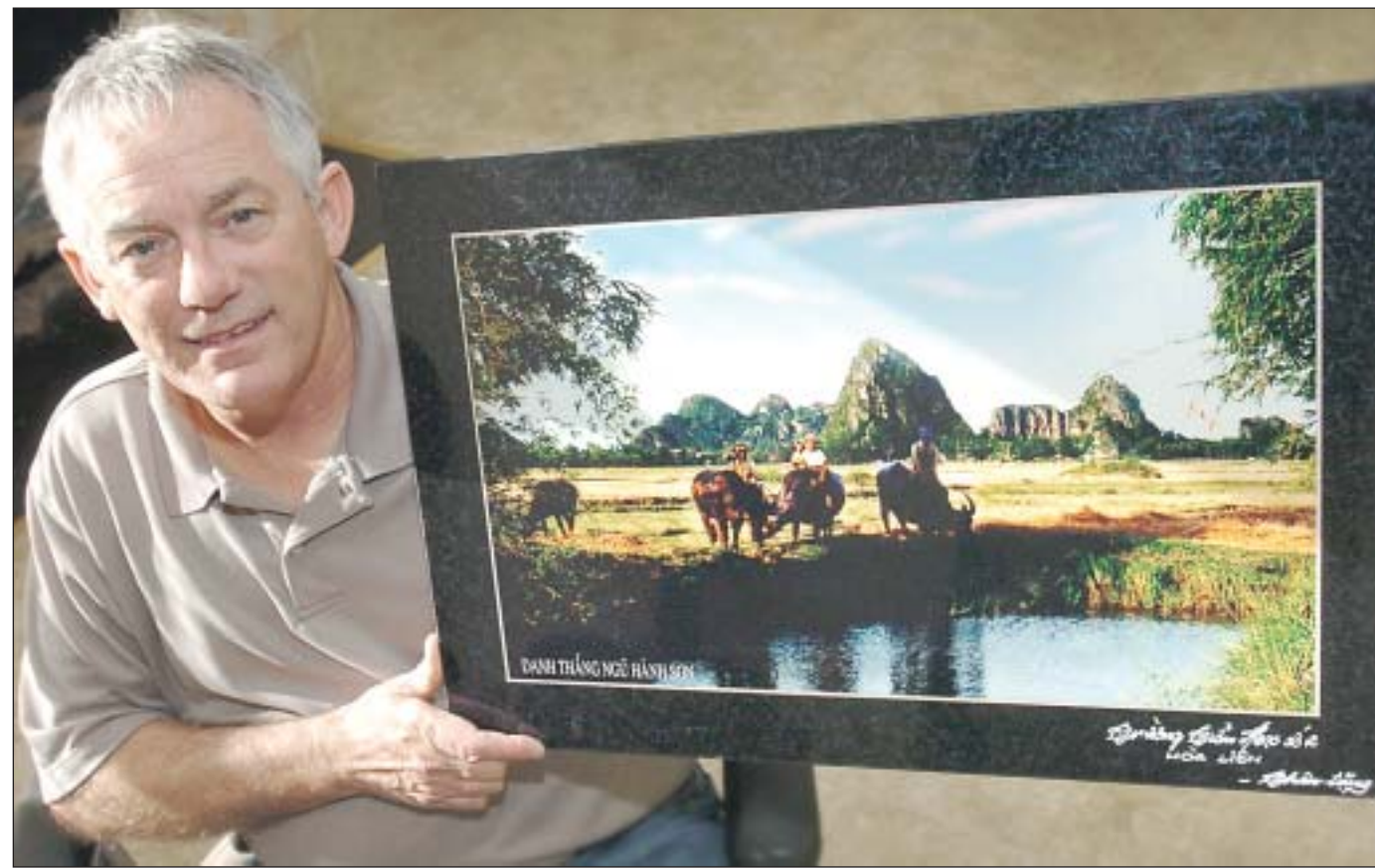


Valley's Ian Benson (12) pressures Burrell's Zack Ziemianski (4) during Friday's game at Greensburg Central Catholic High School. Burrell won, 56-51, as the high school basketball season opened.

LOUIS B. RUEDIGER, staff photographer

Vietnam revisited

Veteran returns from humanitarian mission renewed



BOB FRITZ, staff photographer

Dave Christopher, a Vietnam veteran, holds a plaque he received for donating a public address system to a Vietnamese school while he was there on a two-week humanitarian trip. Christopher enjoyed the experience so much, that he can't wait to return.

By Rob Amen
Staff writer

TARENTUM — Large craters still dot the picturesque landscape, a lasting symbol of the relentless bombing of the United States unleashed on the North Vietnamese beginning in early 1965.

Women still carry loads of fruit and goods in baskets attached to the ends of long poles, which rest on their shoulders.

Small motorcycles are still the preferred mode of transportation. And, like it or not, communism still reigns in Vietnam.

Not much has changed in Vietnam since Tarentum resident Dave Christopher left in 1972 after serving almost a year as an 18-year-old repair parts serviceman in the Army's 92nd Assault Helicopter Company.

Unlike many who served in Vietnam, Christopher decided to return. Owner of Christopher's Salon along East 10th Street, he joined Global Humanitarian Expeditions as a volunteer for 16 days in

Learn more

- Global Humanitarian Expeditions: www.humanitariantours.com/Home.htm
- Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command: www.jpac.pacom.mil

November, helping a team of dentists and their assistants care for some of the neediest families in the Da Nang area.

Christopher served as an assistant and kept patients' charts. During the clinic, 1,140 children were examined, and \$160,000 worth of dental care was completed — for free.

Search for remains continues

Christopher also traveled to an office housing a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. The commands search for veterans' remains in the hopes of sending them home, finding clues as to how they died and giving closure to the soldiers' families.

The commands conduct missions like archeologist digs, surrounding a specific area in which they have received tips where MIA's or POW's remains might be and combing the land.

Although he was unable to see an active dig in Vietnam, Christopher spoke with Deputy Commander Maj. Jay Rutter in Hanoi. Rutter told him that a mission in October discovered the remains of five American soldiers.

Christopher, who left Nov. 28 to return home, recounted last week in his salon the extraordinary work the POW/MIA command and Global Humanitarian Expeditions have performed. He spoke with such passion for their work and his desire to return — again — to a country that some veterans who served there would rather forget.

"I had a little apprehension about going, (worrying about) how people would treat you," Christopher said. "They were absolutely fantastic. ... I'm definitely going back. To me, it's like a community."

"If you're looking for a trip to brighten your soul," he wrote in an e-mail to a friend, "it's there."

He said the Vietnamese hold no animosity toward Americans and have put the war behind them.

Like many foreign countries, Christopher said, Vietnam shows some signs of Americanization; children are eager to practice their English, and Internet cafes are abundant.

"They don't think about the war at all," he said. "They don't look back. It's not in their culture. They look forward."

Like the people whom he has grown fond of, Christopher also looks forward, waiting with anticipation for his next opportunity to return to Vietnam.

Rob Amen can be reached at ramen@tribweb.com.

Blazes in old towns challenge firefighters

Houses practically touch each other

By Jason Walker
Staff writer

When fire crews arrived on the scene of a Tuesday morning blaze at 137 Lafayette St. in Vandergrift they found the fire had spread to two neighboring houses.

The houses at 135 and 139 Lafayette St. were so close to the one where the fire started that their roofs were almost touching. Crews were able to stop the fire from spreading to another house at 133 Lafayette St. and prevented that house from sustaining heavy damage.

The cause of the fire had still not been determined Friday.

With houses and buildings almost on top of one another in many communities across the Valley, it's always a concern that fires might spread.

That situation recently took place in the Natrona section of Harrison as well as in New Kensington.

A fire in June 2001 at a house at 249 Ridge Ave., New Kensington, quickly spread to houses at 251 and 245 Ridge Ave. The houses in that neighborhood were so close that their gutters almost touched.

In April this year, a fire was intentionally set at 47 Spruce St. in Natrona. That fire spread to 43 Spruce St., which sits only a few feet away from where the blaze began. The vacant house at 47 Spruce St. was destroyed and the occupied house at 43 Spruce St. sustained heavy

See FIRE, Page 2

How to help

Kiski Area Association of Churches has set up a fund for the victims of Tuesday's fire that destroyed three houses and damaged another along Lafayette Street in Vandergrift.

Donations may be made at the First Commonwealth branches in Vandergrift, Leechburg and Allegheny Township, or mailed to KAAC Lafayette Street Fire Fund, First Commonwealth Bank, 152 Grant Ave., Vandergrift, PA 15690. Donations of furniture, appliances and household goods are welcome. Anyone wanting to donate those items is asked to call 724-567-6813.

Navy investigates SEALs' photos for possible Iraqi prisoner abuse

By Seth Hettena
The Associated Press

CORONADO, Calif. — The U.S. military has launched a criminal investigation into photographs that appear to show Navy SEALs in Iraq sitting on hooded and handcuffed detainees, and photos of what appear to be bloodied prisoners, one with a gun to his head.

Some of the photos have date stamps suggesting they were taken in May 2003, which could make them the earliest evidence

of possible abuse of prisoners in Iraq. The far more brutal practices photographed in Abu Ghraib prison occurred months later.

Found on Web site

An Associated Press reporter found more than 40 of the pictures among hundreds in an album posted on a commercial photo-sharing Web site by a woman who said her husband brought them from Iraq after his tour of duty. It is unclear who

took the pictures, which the Navy said it was investigating after the AP furnished copies to get comment for this story.

These and other photos found by the AP appear to show the immediate aftermath of raids on civilian homes. One man is lying on his back with a boot on his chest. A mug shot shows a man with an automatic weapon pointed at his head and a gloved thumb jabbed into his throat. In many photos, faces have been

See PHOTOS, Page A2

Coming Sunday

A wronged man

Jerry Pacek, who at age 13 got unintentionally wrapped up in one of the Valley's most mysterious murders, died just before Thanksgiving at age 59.

He served 10 years in state prison for the 1958 killing of Brackenridge resident Lillian Stevick. But the case was reopened in 1990 and the detectives working it don't believe Pacek was the killer. Gov. Bob Casey granted him a full pardon in 1991.

In Sunday's edition, the Valley News Dispatch explores Pacek's life and the grueling case. Investigators believe the killer may still be alive.

