

How dispatchers handle the stress **911** IN ACCENT

IN SPORTS  
NASCAR to install 'black boxes'  
Earnhardt crash report:  
Angle of impact, seat belt among factors in death



Prescribed burn in Martin to help restore scrub habitat  
LOCAL NEWS, 1B

DODGERS 5  
MARLINS 4  
SPORTS, 1C

WEATHER: Afternoon storms likely.  
High 90, low 75.  
FORECAST ON BACK PAGE OF SPORTS

# The Palm Beach Post

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50 cents

## Suspect in 20-year-old Queens killings found in Boca

Frank Riccardi had created a new life for himself

By Molly Hennessy-Fiske  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

BOCA RATON — After 18 years building a respectable life in South Florida, Anthony Frank Alonzo drove a silver Mercedes, shared a luxury Mizner Park condo with his mother and managed newspaper sales for the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*.

Then detectives showed up at his door Monday looking for fugitive Frank Riccardi, wanted since 1981 by New York police on

double murder charges.

"I introduced myself and I said 'Give me a second, Frank,' and as soon as I said that, he said, 'Oh, I know what this is about.' Right then he admitted his real identity was Frank Riccardi," said Palm Beach County sheriff's homicide Detective Brian Cahir.

Riccardi was being held without bail at the Palm Beach County Jail Tuesday night, awaiting extradition to New York to face charges of shooting Shamrock Bar co-

owners Richard Godkin, 35, and John D'Agnes, 22, to death on April 11, 1981.

Witnesses told police Riccardi's beef with Godkin began when someone spilled a drink on his date, according to Mary de Bourbon, spokeswoman for Queens District Attorney Richard Brown. Riccardi got loud that April night and the barkeep threw him out, de Bourbon said — but not before Riccardi threatened to return to the Richmond Hill watering hole.

When he did, he brought friends Robert Vernace and Ronald Barlin, both men with "known mob connections," according to

New York City Detective Thomas Mansfield. One of the men had a gun, and in the struggle that ensued, Godkin and D'Agnes were shot, a third shot was fired into the ceiling and the three fled, de Bourbon said.

A judge dismissed charges against Barlin after Mafia don John Gotti's niece and another witness at the bar that night recanted, Mansfield said. Vernace, 52, was arrested in 1998 in Florida and is scheduled to stand trial this winter. He and Riccardi were each charged with two counts of in-

*I introduced myself and I said "Give me a second, Frank," and as soon as I said that, he said, "Oh, I know what this is about."*

BRIAN CAHIR  
Palm Beach County sheriff's homicide detective

Please see FUGITIVE, 9A

## GOP icon Helms to step down in 2003

The North Carolina senator has struggled with physical ailments in recent years.

By Helen Dewar and Dan Balz  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., one of the most powerful conservatives on Capitol Hill for the past three decades and a former chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, plans to announce today that he will retire when his term expires in early 2003, sources said Tuesday.

Helms, who will turn 80 in October, has suffered from a variety of health problems in recent years and has mulled for months whether to run for a sixth term, with his family pushing hard for him to return to North Carolina.



The senator's office declined comment but other sources, including Republicans both here and in North Carolina, said Helms is planning to announce his retirement tonight on WRAL-TV in Raleigh, where he worked as a political commentator before running for the Senate.

Helms aides began telling key Republicans of his plans late Tuesday.

Helms' retirement would deprive the Senate of one of its most ardent champions of conservative causes that ranged from fighting communism abroad to promoting school prayer and combating pornography at home.

A man of bold colors and few pastels, he aroused strong passions on both left and right and delighted as much in the fury of foes as he did in the adoration of friends.

He appeared to mellow a bit in recent years but retained most of his sharp edges.

"He embodied the notion that there was an American conservative movement, a body of politicians and polemicists and grassroots organizations that most of the time, on most issues, worked together (and) who had a distinctive take on where the country was and where it should go," William Kristol, editor of the conservative *Weekly Standard*. "I think that movement does not exist anymore and Helms' departure exemplifies that fact."

Helms' retirement also throws another element of uncertainty into what is expected to be an extraordinarily close con-

Please see HELMS, 9A

## THE LOXAHATCHEE'S DYING CANOPY

The 'wild and scenic' Loxahatchee River is losing its centuries-old canopy — as salt water replaces the fresh water the cypress trees need.

# Can these cypress trees be saved?



Photos by DAVID SPENCER/Staff Photographer

By Robert P. King

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

C huck Sisco's kayak glides across dark-amber water under the shadow of centuries-old cypress trees, surrounded by the sparsest of background noises: Paddles clack. Distant traffic whooshes. Far off, a cardinal calls *whoit-whoit-whoit*.

If you ignore the overhanging power lines and the highway overpasses, this is a trip back to the 19th century. Decades after every other river in Southeast Florida has been chopped and dynamited into a straight-banked canal, only the Loxahatchee River northwest of Jupiter still twists and curves freely.

"It's like going through a cathedral, the Notre Dame cathedral," marvels Sisco, an activist with a group called the Loxahatchee River Trust, staring up at the cypresses' curving trunks. "And they're turning it into a gravel pile."

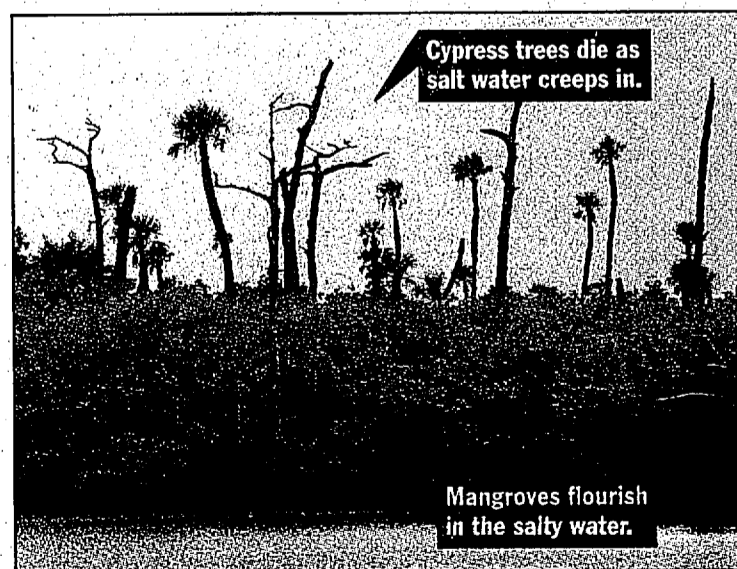
A few miles downstream, as the river widens in Jonathan Dickinson State Park, the cathedral lies in ruins. The white husks of dead cypress trees line the banks — killed, scientists believe, by ill-planned drainage and dredging projects that drew in salt water from the Atlantic. Salt-loving mangroves have thronged in their place.

Twenty-eight years ago, the damage prompted federal scientists to label the

Please see RIVER, 6A

### In some places, trees line the banks . . .

No one knows how much fresh water healthy cypress trees, such as this canopy just north of Indiantown Road (above), need to survive. Now nearly three-quarters of the trees along the river's Northwest Fork have died. The cost to prevent more of the trees from dying could top \$600 million.



Cypress trees die as salt water creeps in.

Mangroves flourish in the salty water.

### . . . In others, the canopy is vanishing

Tree husks of dead cypress line the river downstream from Kitching Creek, a result of decades of development and drainage.

## FBI raids Liberty Medical offices

Agents seize records and inspect computer hard drives as part of a Medicare fraud investigation.

By Susan T. Port  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

PORT ST. LUCIE — FBI agents Tuesday afternoon raided the offices of diabetes-test provider Liberty Medical Supply, the subject of a federal investigation into allegations of Medicare fraud.

Eighty-five agents, including 19 computer specialists, swarmed over four company offices in St. Lucie and Martin counties seizing records and inspecting computer hard drives. Two private houses belonging to Liberty Medical employees also were raided, the agency said.

The raid, which began at 1 p.m., was scheduled to continue through midnight Tuesday, with more action possible this morning.

"We are looking for quite a bit of information," said Judy Orihuela, an FBI spokeswoman.

Liberty Medical, whose workers sell diabetes test kits and respiratory products directly out of a call center in Port St. Lucie, is the third-largest employer in St. Lucie County, with almost 1,100 people on its payroll.

Founded in 1989, the company has grown to become the nation's largest seller of diabetes test kits. The company also supplies products for those suffering from respiratory ailments. Liberty Medical ships more than 80,000 products a month.

Liberty Medical's products are familiar to millions of Americans through radio ads voiced by legendary broadcaster Paul Harvey, and television ads featuring veteran character actor Wilford Brimley.

The raid came two weeks after Liberty Medical and its parent company, Woburn, Mass.-based

Please see LIBERTY, 8A

## Hamburglars collected millions

FBI arrests 8 in scheme to rig McDonald's 'Monopoly' game

By Eric Lichtblau  
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — With countless McDonald's french fries and sodas came the chance for riches: Snack on a Value Meal, play our latest promotional game and walk away a McMillionaire.

There was just one problem: The games were rigged.

Acting on an informant's tip, the FBI arrested eight people Tuesday in connection with an elaborate scheme to allegedly plant big-money game cards in the hands of fake "winners," who claimed the prizes and then split the proceeds with their cruiters.

Authorities alleged that the conspirators raked

Please see McDONALD'S, 5A

### Heart recipient speaks:

Robert Tools is introduced to the world and explains how he has grown used to the whirl of his new artificial heart.

TORY, 2A

### Son of fugitive found:

A note on a family photograph leads police to the body of Nikolay Soltys' son.

STORY, 3A

### Interest rate drop:

The Federal Reserve cuts interest rates for the seventh time this year.

BUSINESS, 5B

### Hurricane trivia challenge:

Test your knowledge of deadly and destructive storms.

GOPBI.com

ANN & ABBY 2D LOTTERY 2A  
BUSINESS 5B PEOPLE 2A  
CLASSIFIED 8C SCORES 7C  
COMICS 8D STOCKS 6B  
DEATHS 4B THEATERS 3D  
EDITORIALS 12A TV LISTINGS 7D  
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