

## Briefing

### INDIANA

#### 'Praying robber' suspect seeks mercy

■ INDIANAPOLIS - He may have hugged the clerk. He may have prayed with her, too. But prosecutors say Gregory Smith's contrition during a crime in progress doesn't change the fact he still robbed a check cashing store.

A judge entered a not guilty plea Tuesday for Smith, who appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" last week after a security video showing a gunman praying with clerk Angela Montez during an Oct. 19 robbery of an Indianapolis check cashing business.

The 23-year-old apologized and said he was driven to the robbery after he lost his job and his family was threatened with eviction.

### RHODE ISLAND

#### Kennedy to meet RI bishop on health care

■ PROVIDENCE - Rep. Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island has agreed to meet with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Providence after a public argument over the national health care overhaul.

Bishop Thomas Tobin requested the meeting in a letter to the Democratic lawmaker, and Kennedy agreed on Thursday. A date hasn't been scheduled.

Kennedy last week criticized Catholic leaders who oppose universal health care plans unless the plans include more restrictions on abortions.

Tobin said Kennedy's comments were "irresponsible" and demanded an apology.

Kennedy, who is Catholic, says that he never meant to slight the church and that it has every right to promote its beliefs.

But he says the issue facing Congress is, in his words, "access to health care and nothing else."

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

#### Swine flu concerns face annual hajj

■ Some of the millions who travel to Saudi Arabia next month for the annual hajj will be greeted with face masks, hand sanitizer and fever checks as health officials strive to stem spread of swine flu during the world's largest pilgrimage.

The Saudi Health Ministry, aided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is setting up an emergency operations center to get real-time reports from area hospitals and clinics to track how many are sick and will need the free anti-viral medication stockpiled for the dense gathering.

The hajj, a pilgrimage required of all able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime, attracts about 3 million people from 160 countries.

### GERMANY

#### Lutherans elect first female leader

■ BERLIN - Germany's Lutheran Church has elected a woman to lead the nation's Protestants for the first time in its history.

Margot Kaessmann was overwhelmingly voted into the church's top position on Wednesday.

The 51-year-old bishop holds a doctorate in theology and has four grown children. She is one of only two women to serve as bishop in Germany's Protestant church.

She was ordained in 1985 and has held many offices within the church. Kaessmann is viewed as being politically active and media savvy.

The Associated Press

# PURPLE BLOOD

## Author Anne Rice has lived in both the darkness and the light

**T**he narrator of the poem "The Dark Night of the Soul," written by the Christian mystic St. John of the Cross, speaks of being wakened in the night and led, as if by a spiritual force, through the outer darkness and into the waiting embrace of a lover.

The metaphor for man's alienation and return to God, with its haunting, erotic imagery, is also a perfect metaphor for the spiritual journey of author Anne Rice.

Since her first novel, "Interview with the Vampire" debuted in 1976, Rice has sold nearly 100 million books, most of them featuring characters who are either witches, spirits or, like her most famous protagonist, the vampire Lestat, one of the legions of the undead feeding on the blood of the living.

Rice's signature style — part florid Southern Gothic, part historical fiction, part fantasy — draws heavily from the Catholic symbolism and piety that colored her childhood in New Orleans.

"My mother, Katherine, taught me a great love for the world of the invisible, the world of spiritual values, the world of truth," Rice said, speaking on the phone from her home in California.

Despite her religious upbringing, Rice was a committed atheist most of her literary life. Today she's come back to the faith into which she was baptized, and her work has taken a bold, new direction.

Rice recently spoke to the Daily Journal about her return to the church, as well as about her work and how she's

sure that, in some mysterious way, it all serves the glory of God.

Among all her characters, Rice identifies most with the vam-

Turn to **PURPLE** on Page 11B

BY GALEN HOLLEY

DAILY JOURNAL

## HEARERS OF THE WORD

# Life in an old chaos of the sun

**O**ctober Saturdays at our house are sepia-colored, cat-lazy, smell like cut grass and Pine Sol, move to the delayed "throp, thropping" of Harleys gliding down 301 South, Delta-wise, toward the casinos on a charity run.

"Have you filled the bird feeder?" the wife asks, over the sizzle of bacon.

"No, maw. I ain't."

I open a can of ranch style beans with my eggs and she tells me that's the work of the devil.

Rather be whipped than go shopping but mama can't carry 40-pound sacks of cat litter so I put on clean socks and tell myself it'll all be over quick, like peeling a bandage.

Impossible to tell who I've offended each week so checking my e-mail is like reaching my hand into the garbage disposal.

Early afternoons I'm sipping coffee

and buying diesel at the bait-and-tackle shop, nodding to the addicts that amble in with fistfuls of sweaty bills and craven faces.

Like intestinal parasites they're good for harvesting the dried crust of deli bologna; good for a snaggle-toothed quip about the stuffed bear looming over the "Cat-fish Charlie."

Once and again of a Saturday the Presbyterians bury somebody, half-mile chain of pickups and domestic sedans stretching to the intersection of 304. I disengage the PTO, tilt back my hat and just sit till they make the hill of the

cemetery.

"We could go to Square Books, or at least to Cracker Barrel in Batesville," the wife says, but that's a lot to ask, and I'm not up to it.

"I'm pleased to hear the 'mew' of yard kittens under the evergreens along the edge of the drive," I tell her, "waiting to be eaten by jealous Toms, and I like seeing that concrete ditch between me and the rest of the world."

But that's not Christian, and I don't care.

By 6 p.m. my phone nearly vibrates off the table, but that's time to start getting deloused, hunkered down for the SEC night game.

A good ration of smoked meat will do, and a book of Barry Hannah's short stories for when I mute the commercials.

"I like Uga, or Smoky," the wife says, sounding the barks of the mascots of Georgia and Tennessee. "They wear

sweaters. Are they playing tonight?"

"Yaz'um," I tell her, but not each other.

A cup of half-time coffee with a dash of old grandpa is good to start you toward your rest.

Third quarter I decide if I'll get to Mass next morning early enough to be asked to read. Most times not. I've never been able to properly explain myself before 11 a.m.

"I have a mind to recite 'Sunday Morning' by Wallace Stevens if I'm drafted," I tell her, then dissolve into lily-livered gibberish about green wings and oranges.

She watches my mind fly out over the wide water of our not-yet pond and tells me be content with watching the birds feed.

Contact Daily Journal religion editor **Galen Holley** at 678-1510 or galen.holley@dailyjournal.com.





SUDOKU PUZZLE (SOLUTION ON THIS PAGE)

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively

Sudoku grid with numbers 5, 9, 7, 3, 2, 7, 6, 1, 4, 7, 3, 6, 9, 1, 3, 2, 4, 9, 8, 4, 5, 1, 8, 3, 6.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

YOUR HEALTH

Dear Dr. Donohue:

When my son was 3, our pediatrician said he had a heart murmur. He didn't say anything needed to be done, and he didn't say the boy couldn't be as active as he wanted to be.



Dr. DONOHUE

horrified. I don't want her to have the same bulging muscles that he has developed. They're fine on him. They won't be fine on her.

I'm all for it. Just about everyone in the fitness world endorses weightlifting for girls. They endorse it for people of all ages and both sexes.

Your daughter won't develop the same bulging muscles that your son has developed. She doesn't have the same amount of testosterone he does.

Dr. Donohue regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but he will incorporate them in his column whenever possible.

Sure, mention it. The doctor will be extra careful when listening to the boy's heart.

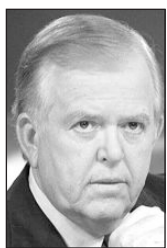
Murmurs are noises made because of eddy currents developing in the blood when it flows from one heart chamber to the next.

I wouldn't be the least surprised if the examining doctor hears no murmur.

Dear Dr. Donohue: My 15-year-old daughter is using her 17-year-old brother's weightlifting equipment.

Bullet hits Dobbs' N.J. home with wife nearby

WANTAGE - Police in New Jersey are trying to determine who fired a bullet that struck CNN commentator Lou Dobbs' home as his wife stood nearby.



DOBBS

State police Sgt. Stephen Jones says Dobbs' wife and driver were outside the home Oct. 5 when they heard the gunshot.

Dobbs mentioned the bullet earlier this week on CNN and his radio show.

Dobbs says he had been receiving threatening phone calls for weeks. On his radio show, he connected the gunshot to his advocacy for a crackdown on illegal immigration and to his opponents' rhetoric.

The home is on a farm in Wantage, about 50 miles northwest of New York City.

It is small-game hunting season, but no hunters were seen in the area.

Agassi's memoir publisher withholds e-edition

NEW YORK - If you're eager to read Andre Agassi's memoir, don't expect to download it any time soon.

Agassi's "Open" will not be available as an e-book when the hardcover comes out, Nov. 9, and publisher Alfred

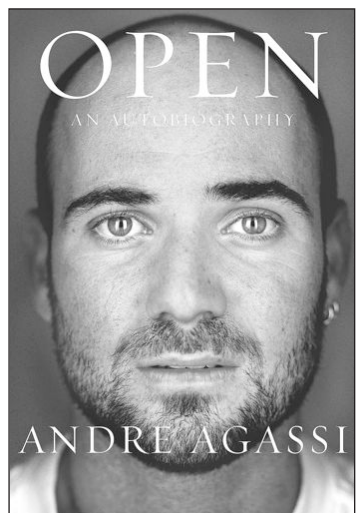
A. Knopf has not set a date for a digital version.

"We're not releasing an e-book at this time but may consider releasing one in the future," Knopf spokesman Paul Bogaards said Thursday.

E-editions also have been withheld for Sarah Palin's "Going Rogue," Edward Kennedy's "True Compass" and Stephen King's "Under the Dome" as publishers worry that the growing e-market will take business from the more expensive hardcovers.

In Agassi's book, No. 9 on the best-seller list of Amazon.com as of Thursday afternoon, the tennis great acknowledges using crystal meth in the 1990s and then lying to the Association of Tennis Professionals tour after failing a 1997 drug test.

The Associated Press



Cover of "Open" by Andre Agassi

ADVICE

Dear Abby: As a fire officer, I have seen far too many families fall victim to accidental home fires. It is devastating to find out that a life could have been saved if someone had only taken that simple step of replacing a dead battery in a smoke alarm.

For 22 years, the International Association of Fire Chiefs and Energizer have been committed to changing this statistic through the "Change Your Clock Change Your Battery" campaign.

As winter approaches, more people will begin using gas appliances to heat their homes and may find themselves at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, called the "silent killer" because this gas is colorless, odorless and tasteless.

Thank you, Abby, for helping us spread this lifesaving message to your readers. - Jeffrey D. Johnson, President, International Association of Fire Chiefs

Dear Jeff: I'm glad to help, and I know my readers are grateful for your timely reminder. It may seem like a menial task, but safeguarding yourselves and your families is extremely important - so change those batteries this weekend!

Dear Abby: For the last two years I have been going out with a guy I'll call "Ricky." My problem is I don't love him anymore. A few weeks ago I told him I no longer wanted to be with him, and he started crying.

Abby, I want to end it. Ricky suffocates me. He's



Dear ABBY

depressed because his mom works and doesn't have time for him. His dad doesn't live with them, so Ricky feels he has only me to talk to. He wants to marry me, and I don't want to lie and say I will.

Dear Troubled: I'm sure the news that you wanted to break up was painful for Ricky to hear - hence the tears - but saying his life is in your hands was a form of emotional blackmail.

Ricky appears to be needy and immature. Call his mother, tell her that you are ending the relationship and that he isn't taking it well.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

Today: Folk singer Tom Paxton is 72. Actor Ron Rifkin is 70. Actress Sally Kirkland is 68. Actor David Ogden Stiers ("M.A.S.H.") is 67. Actress Deirdre Hall ("Days of Our Lives") is 61. Director Peter Jackson ("Lord of the Rings") is 48. Drummer Larry Mullen of U2

is 48. Guitarist Johnny Marr of Modest Mouse (and The Smiths) is 46. Actor Dermot Mulroney is 46. Drummer Mikkey Dee of Motorhead is 46. Country singer Darryl Worley is 45. Actor Rob Schneider is 45. Guitarist Adrock of the Beastie Boys is 43. Musician Adam

Schelsinger of Fountains of Wayne is 42. Musician Rob Van Winkle (Vanilla Ice) is 41. Singer Linn Berggren of Ace of Base is 39. Actor Eddie Kaye Thomas ("American Pie") is 29. Guitarist Frank Iero of My Chemical Romance is 28.

The Associated Press



Anchorman Dan Rather is 78 today.

SUDOKU SOLUTION

Sudoku solution grid with numbers 1-9.

Purple

Continued from Page 7B

pire Louis, the protagonist of her first novel, a lonely, contemplative creature who grieves the loss of his mortality.

"I was essentially grieving the loss of my own faith," said Rice, recalling how as a child she was enraptured with the lives of the saints and longed to devote her life to God.

Rice started drifting away from the church years before she achieved any literary success. After her mother's death she moved to Texas, outside the world of parish schools and what she came to see as the authoritarian hand of the church.

In the '70s she and husband Stan Rice made a life inside intellectual circles in San Francisco, a life that decidedly did not include religion.

"We met terrific, secular, intellectual people," she said of her close friends, many of whom were homosexuals.

"They were absolutely committed to making the world a better, more beautiful place." Although the couple's five-year-old daughter, Michelle, died of leukemia in 1972, their atheism remained grounded less in bitterness than in disillusionment, their belief that the Christianity they both professed as children simply wasn't tenable anymore.

After the publication of "Interview," the success of Rice's subsequent novels made her an icon among legions of readers. They devoured her sumptuous stories about beautiful, guilt-ridden vampires and families of witches living in decrepit ante-bellum mansions.

She traveled extensively, then, in the mid-1990s, as she was visiting some of the most awe-inspiring works of religious art in the world, like the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, she began to feel a change coming over her.

In 1998 she experienced an emotional conversion nearly four decades in the making. Four years later she completely rededicated her life to Christ and she's been a recommitted Catholic ever since.

People sometimes ask Rice if she regrets having written stories about the occult, or the erotica she wrote under a pen name.

"Absolutely not," she said. "My books are transformative. They demonstrate a moral compass, a real sense of right and wrong. Evil isn't glorified."

Her recent novels have included two fictionalized accounts of the boyhood of Jesus, and her 29th book, "Angel Time," released this week, which weaves together the themes of the heavenly hosts, history, and Rice's long-time interest in Judaism, an interest that played a large part in her return to Christianity.

People sometimes wrongly assume that when Rice creates a character she's condoning the character's actions.

"In fact, when I was writing those dark characters, they felt themselves cut off from grace, from light, and that's the way I felt, cut off from those same things," she said. "They were metaphors for lost souls."

The enduring symbolic power of the vampire, Rice feels, is precisely as one who is cut-off, as the ultimate outsider.

"It's us, the ones who contemplate immortality," she said. "All of us feel ourselves, at times, to be predators and sinners."

Rice sees Stephanie Meyer's popular "Twilight" books and the HBO series "True Blood" as examples of vampire fiction that are intelligent and symbolically rich and which speak to the experience of being "other."

For Rice that sense of being an outsider extends also to gender and sexuality. She's felt a life-long aversion to overly stringent gender roles, a trait she's written into many of her characters. Her books have enjoyed widespread popularity within the gay community and her son, novelist Christopher Rice, is gay.

The Catholic Church holds that homosexuality is gravely disordered, but Rice, an avid student of theology, prays that will change with time.

"People like me, who grew up in the South in the '40s and '50s, should really stop and

think about this," she said. "Back then we were told many of the same things. We were given biblical reasons why society would become decadent and immoral if we allowed people of color equal status in society. Nobody today would think any of that had any validity whatsoever."

Like her supernatural characters, Rice remains a great fan of humanity.

"When I was a child it was very brutal, but today we live in an unprecedented age of understanding about homosexuality and I hope people will continue to learn," she said.

"How many school teachers, clergy, artists - gay people in all walks of life - need us to learn and understand more? Christianity has always had its scapegoats, but we have to stop this. We have to define ourselves without persecuting another group."

Redemptive power

A poem written by Rice's husband, Stan, begins, "Some things lighten nightfall, and make a Rembrandt of a grief."

That sense of the dark beauty in life has characterized all of Rice's work. It has also given her a calm acceptance that God's ways are essentially unknowable to man.

In December of 1998 Rice went into a diabetic coma and nearly died. Four years later, her husband of more than 40 years, Stan, died of brain cancer. For an author who'd writ-

ten so much about immortality, the specter of death was suddenly very close.

"I've never really asked 'Why me?'" said Rice. "It's quite the opposite. I think bad things are just what we - humans - call random, and for me they don't particularly encourage or discourage faith. They're just part of the life that I see all around me."

Rice's submission to the mystery of God has also freed her to enjoy a thoroughgoing love of life. She's a big fan of holidays, particularly those with religious origins, and she detests what she calls the "lingering Puritanism" that aligns against them.

"It's part of the wisdom of our Christian ancestors to take those pagan observances and translate them into feasts," she said of holidays like Halloween.

"Not many people realize that Puritans wanted to outlaw Christmas celebrations because they felt they were too geared toward feasting and enjoyment. We have to have outlets for that Dionysian energy in life."

After Stan's death Rice left her home in the Garden District of New Orleans, the setting for several of her stories, and moved to California. Today she

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