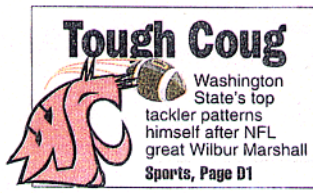




### No sign

Deputies search  
Arbony site for evidence  
in disappearance case

Local, Page A3



### Tough Coug

Washington  
State's top  
tackler patterns  
himself after NFL  
great Wilbur Marshall

Sports, Page D1

### Stamp hike

The cost of mailing  
a letter goes up  
Sunday

Local, Page A3



# The Columbian

SERVING CLARK COUNTY, WASH.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1994

50 CENTS

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## A road to despair

Velma Stewart died of exposure the December night her husband made a wrong turn into the backwoods. But events leading to the tragedy began unfolding years before

By BRETT OPPEGAARD  
The Columbian

STEVENSON — The tires on Ernie and Velma Stewart's four-wheel drive pickup spun wildly, then stopped. The surroundings looked unfamiliar, especially in the foot-deep snow, but Ernie insisted they were just a few steps from dinner at their nice warm Washington home after an afternoon of bowling.

He grabbed his bowling ball and hopped out. Velma, his wife, 77, followed.

The next morning an elk hunter found Ernie huddled in the snow. The 70-year-old had spent the night on the side of the road between Dougan Falls and Stevenson, but Velma was nowhere to be found. Ernie told the hunter she must have made it home.

On the way back to town, they found Velma. She was lying about 100 yards from the pickup, where she had died of exposure.

Their nearby truck was equipped with a citizens band radio and nearly a full tank of gas — enough to idle the engine and run the heater all night, said Dennis Warren, a deputy sheriff in Skamania County. Even without turning the heater on, they both would have survived if they had stayed inside the truck.

Unfortunately, the common sense to make that decision was no longer available. Instead, it marked a sad ending to the couple's fight against getting old.

### Retirement

After working at the Camas paper mill for 30 years, Ernie retired at age 59, bought a motor home and had grand plans of becoming a full-time tourist with Velma. His grasp on Ernie's American Dream was firm.



A 10-year-old portrait photo shows Velma and Ernie Stewart as a happy, loving couple. In the past four years everything changed.

Time was his. All his.

At first, he enjoyed the independence. He went fishing and bowling whenever he wanted. No time card in punch. Never in a hurry.

The bliss didn't last long though. Within months, post-retirement depression set in, then dementia — a general term for memory loss due to age. Not only did he feel as though he was no longer a productive person in society, he also was easily confused. Velma started showing signs of dementia a short time later. Their children suspected both had Alzheimer's disease, a specific form of dementia.

Dr. David M. Smith, Ernie's geriatrics psy-

chiatrist at Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center, said typical symptoms of dementia include memory loss, geographical disorientation and a change in personality.

During the previous four years, those symptoms had become progressively more severe in the Stewarts. It ranged from misplacing keys to repeating conversations to forgetting where their children lived. By the time Velma was found dead on Dec. 10, they had become complete opposites of their former selves.

"We tried everything we could to help

Please see Despair, Page A7

## Russians pounding Chechnya

Dudayev now willing to talk peace, radio reports; intense fighting near Grozny

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — With Russian bombs raining down on the capital of his republic, Chechnya's leader, holed up in a bomb shelter under the presidential palace, reportedly told the Kremlin today he was ready to talk peace.

Despite the lengthening odds faced by outnumbered Chechen forces, it was by no means clear President Dzhokhar Dudayev was backing down. He has steadfastly refused to negotiate unless Russian troops withdraw from Chechnya.

Radio Mayak of Moscow — affiliated with state-run Ostanino broadcasting — and the independent news agency Interfax said Dudayev had sent a telegram notifying Russia of his intent to hold talks. The reports, citing unnamed sources in Grozny, said Dudayev called the offer unconditional, but previous offers he also labeled unconditional have in fact held to

the withdrawal demand.

A spokesman for the Russian government press service said he could not confirm the reports, and Chechen officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Russians hold a huge advantage in manpower and equipment, with as many as 40,000 troops to only several thousand Chechens, and have made significant gains in recent days.

Heavy fighting raged on the edges of Grozny as Russian forces tried to press their attack on the rebel capital from north and east.

Smoke darkened the sky over Grozny's industrial district today as Russian bombers roared overhead and artillery pounded the outskirts of Grozny. The city was hit by airstrikes throughout the day.

Both Chechen and Russian officials reported clashes on the northern, western and eastern edges of Grozny.

Later today, Chechen officials told the Interfax news agency that Russian forces had halted their

Please see Russia, Page A8

## Seahawks fire Flores, 12 assistant coaches

KIRKLAND, Wash. (AP) — The Seattle Seahawks have fired coach Tom Flores

Flores, 57, made the announcement this morning after telling all 12 assistant coaches they also had been dismissed.

Flores learned of his fate at a meeting Tuesday in Danville, Calif., with majority owner Ken Behring.

"We didn't win. There were a lot of empty seats in the stadium and somebody has to be blamed. I'm not angry at anybody. My only desire right now is to get out of town," Flores told the press after meeting with his assistant coaches.

"History remembers you sometimes, but you're only a statistic," Flores said.

Flores compiled a 14-34 record in his three seasons as the Seahawks' head coach, including a 4-20



Tom Flores

"We didn't win. Somebody has to be blamed."

mark against AFC West clubs. The Seahawks finished in last place in their five-team division in all three of their seasons under Flores.

In a dozen seasons as an NFL head coach, Flores has a head coaching record of 105-90, including a 47-47 regular-season mark. He got his 100th coaching victory this season.

The Seahawks were 6-10 for the second straight year.

## Welfare plan a 'cruel hoax,' Shalala says

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican plan to revamp the welfare system would deny aid to 5 million children now on the rolls without providing nearly enough money to care for them in orphanages and foster homes, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala said today.

Shalala called the GOP's welfare overhaul a "cruel hoax whose human consequences would fall on children, and whose financial consequences would fall on state taxpayers and private charities."

Her comments are the latest

Please see Welfare, Page A7

## Dedicated Duck fans will not be denied

Getting there is half the fun — almost as much fun as getting a ticket to the game

By MIKE BAILEY  
The Columbian

Arnie Dyer once promised his son, Garrison, that if the University of Oregon football team ever pulled off a miracle and made it to the Rose Bowl, he'd take the family to Pasadena, Calif., to see the game.

One of many frustrated Duck fans the past two decades, Dyer had come to the conclusion he might never have to pay up on the promise.

Then it happened. Oregon won the Pac-10 title, earned its first trip

to the Rose Bowl in 37 years, and Dyer found himself making good on that promise this week.

The entire Dyer family — Arnie, wife Mary, daughter Katie and Garrison — leaves Friday.

Dyer, a teacher in the Evergreen School District, is like many Oregon fans from Vancouver. He discovered there's a lot more to planning a Rose Bowl vacation than a call to the travel agent.

Scalpers have commanded as much as \$500 for game tickets, and flights to the Los Angeles area were difficult to find as the game loomed closer.

As season-ticket holders, the Dyers were able to book three Rose Bowl tickets through the university. To get the fourth ticket, Katie, a stu-

dent at Oregon, was the first person in line when tickets went on sale for students earlier this month.

"She camped out for 36 hours just to get one ticket," Dyer said. "And then all she got was a voucher to turn in for a ticket at the Rose Bowl."

The family also tried to book a vacation package through the university, but luckily the school lost the faxed request, and Dyer was able to find a less expensive package through a travel agency.

There was also a delay in obtain-

Please see Bowl, Page A8

(Right) The Dyers: Arnie, left, Kate, Garrison and Mary — headed for the Rose Bowl.



JEREMIAH COUGHLAN/The Columbian

Friday's weather:  
High.....44 Low.....32  
For more on local and national weather, see Page C12

Wednesday's winning lottery numbers:  
Washington Lotto 6-14-21-28-31-39.  
Washington Daily Game 4-1-8.  
Keno 3-7-17-23-32-33-34-35-36-44-45-47-48-54-67-70-72-73-78-79.  
Quinto Seven of Spades, Ace of Hearts, Seven of Hearts.  
Six of Hearts, Four of Clubs.  
Oregon Daily 4 7-8-2-2.  
Oregon Megabucks 3-7-21-23-24-27.  
Powerball 17-27-40-43-44. Powerball 24.  
For a list of lottery winners, please see ad on Page A6

WHAT'S INSIDE...  
State's all wet  
More flooding, road damage in western Washington.  
REGION NATION WORLD C1

INDEX on PAGE A2  
'Confession' Skepticism about alleged statement by captive pilot.  
REGION NATION WORLD C1  
Like father ...  
... Like son: The Ruhl has a tradition of playing in the Rose Bowl.  
SPORTS D1  
Phone rates up? AT&T is asking for an increase in long-distance telephone rates.  
MONEY D6

