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■ High: 92 ■ Low: 60



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The Sunshine Boys



Vancouver brothers look at the brighter side of life



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Isaac Spinelli, left, and brother Adam get a ride to church from friend Dave Buhmaster, who dubbed them "the sunshine boys" because of their ever-positive attitudes. Above, Adam works a shift in the giant inflatable cup suit.

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
Columbian staff writer

Lunch rush ends, signaling quitting time for the giant inflatable cup. It stops dancing, waving and dramatically pointing to a nearby sandwich shop. Legs straighten. Arms fall to its sides.

The cup waddles to a secluded spot between the brick and glass of Columbia Tech Center buildings. It tilts and pours out Adam

Spinelli. He emerges headfirst through a zipper — face reddened, blond hair matted with sweat. The bank reader board across the street flashes: 82 degrees. He swigs water, washes it down with cola, then removes the rest of the costume. He's going to have to hurry to catch the bus to his next job. New to town, 30-year-old Adam and his brother, Isaac, 26, had been unable

to find steady work. They always seem to talk a little too loud. Stand a step too close. Act just a bit too enthusiastic for their own good.

They want to live on their own, though, without handouts from their parents or the government. So the Spinelli brothers decide to start a business.

Not exactly sure what they could do, Adam came up with the concept of

Did you know?

■ There are 33,564 people in Washington with developmental disabilities who are enrolled with the state Department of Social and Health Services. Of those, 20,597 receive some kind of state financial support, according to the department's spokesman Shaw Seaman.

SUNSHINE, page A6

Plame case: White House, Rove knew a lot more than they let on

By JIM VANDEHEI
and MIKE ALLEN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Karl Rove had a secret.

In public, he was masterminding President Bush's re-election and brushing off suggestions he had played any part in an unfolding drama: the unmasking of CIA operative Valerie Plame.

In private, the senior White House adviser was meeting, on five occasions, with federal prosecutors to tell about the matter.

The story he would tell prosecutors did not seem to square with the White

House's denial that it had played any role in one of the most famous leaks since Watergate.

Rove told prosecutors he had discussed Plame in passing with at least two reporters, including the columnist who eventually revealed her name and role in a secret mission that would raise questions about Bush's case for war against Iraq.

At the same time, other White House officials were whispering about Plame, too.

It is now clear: There has been an element of pretense to the White House strategy of dealing with the Plame case since the earliest days of the saga.

Revelations emerging slowly at first, and in a rapid cascade over the past several days, have made plain



Karl Rove

what he knew

ROVE, page A11



Royce Pollard

READERS RESPOND

■ "I have admired many of Pollard's endeavors in the past but this is ridiculous."

■ The mug "should showcase either the corruption of local government by developers ... or our cement-skulled stupidity regarding transportation."

■ "How about a mug showing Vancouver flipping Portland the bird?"

MUG SHOTS

Readers assail, hail Vancouver's mayor for cup-smashing stunt

By THOMAS RYLL
Columbian staff writer

A radio announcer suggested that the mayor lay off the caffeine. One reader called him a jackass; another likened him to a hero. Others variously described his coffee-cup-smashing stunt as a hissy fit, a tantrum or a welcome assertion of Vancouver's identity.

Last week, Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard destroyed two Starbucks souvenir Portland coffee mugs to protest the fact that they were being sold on this side of the river. He bought the mugs at the Uptown Village store at 24th and Main streets, pounded them into shards, cleaned up the mess afterwards and announced that Vancouver de-

serves its own coffee cup.

Pollard said his stunt was prompted by a call six weeks ago from businessman Arch Miller and reinforced by a second from a downtown resident. Like Pollard, they were irked by the presence of the mugs in a city that has struggled to make a name for itself in the shadow of one of 25 in North America that gets its own Starbucks mug.

Pollard assigned a top city staffer to lead an e-mail charge, but a couple exchanges with Starbucks customer service reps went nowhere. The Columbian's inquiry on Wednesday afternoon led to a quick decision by Starbucks to

MUGS, page A10

Blair vows to fight fanatics

British police identify all four suicide bombers

By CAROL J. WILLIAMS
Los Angeles Times

LONDON — As the investigation into the worst attack in Britain since World War II fanned out to Pakistan, Egypt, Jamaica and the United States, Prime Minister Tony Blair vowed Saturday to confront the "evil ideology" of Islamic fanaticism that has inflicted despair on every community here, including Muslims.

Police have formally identified all four suicide bombers, Scotland Yard reported.

Pathologists put names to body parts found in each of the explosions by analyzing DNA samples collected at their homes and from fingerprints left on a prepaid parking stub one of the men left on his dashboard.

Investigators also released the first photo showing the bombers together, a security camera image of the four entering the Luton train station north of London 90 minutes before the blasts tore apart three underground trains and a double-decker bus. On Saturday, the twisted wreckage of the red No. 30 bus, which had become an icon of the attack, was hauled away from Tavistock Square on a flatbed truck.

The death toll from the bombings rose to 55, as a badly wounded young architect succumbed nine days after being rescued from the blast scene on

On Page A2

■ Young Muslims exposed to messages of hate.

■ Photo shows bomb suspects at train station.

BOMBINGS, page A10



"They don't know why people would be mean to one another. They really love people. ... That's the beautiful part about them. That's their gift."

Joseph Spinelli
stepfather of Adam and Isaac

Sunshine:

From page A1

Spinelli's Sign Service a few months ago when a temp agency sent him out to shake promotional signs.

Perfect for their sociable nature, the Spinellis discovered they have an unusual talent for this type of work.

One of their clients, the Quiznos Sub shop in east Vancouver, equates a Spinelli in a cup costume to a sure 10 percent boost in food sales, says general manager Marc Bowers.

Besides the cup, Adam and Isaac will dress as any holiday-related icon, including a leprechaun, Santa Claus and an Easter bunny. They work without costumes, too, but both prefer a guise as a way to deflect the derogatory comments that regularly come hurled with coins and wads of gum and other hard objects.

"When I'm in the cup, (people regularly) honk and wave and smile," Adam says. "When I'm not in the cup, some people smile and some wave, and some people give me the finger." Or worse.

A classification conundrum

Adam and Isaac are difficult to describe. A barrage of labels has been attached to them over the years, mother Connie acknowledges, but those tend to oversimplify their complexities and contradictions.

Just out of high school in Longview, married to her childhood sweetheart, Connie believes her new baby boy is like any other infant. At 18 months old, though, Adam catches a bad cold. During the exam, the doctor asks if the child is walking. He asks if the boy is talking. Connie answers but doesn't realize where these questions are leading. The doctor treats the cold, then curtly adds: "Well, you might as well face it. He's retarded." Before the shock wears off, Adam has been booked into a special early childhood education program.

Four years later, Connie begins noticing that her second son, Isaac, is developing at the same slow pace. No regrets, Connie thinks. "At least I've been through this once already."

She takes the boys to specialists at the University of Washington in the early 1980s for a series of psychological and motor skills tests. Despite an extensive evaluation, Adam and Isaac don't fit any category. So whenever the question about their condition comes up — and it invariably comes up — Connie uses the boys' initials to classify the syndrome: "AS-IS."

Worse is the self-questioning, Connie says. She recalls a conversation with Adam just after he finished a week on the Washington coast at his grandparents' summer Bible camp. Connie picks up her 9-year-old boy, and instead of being excited about the experience, he's subdued. She thinks he's tired, but the funk lasts for days.

Finally, he asks, "Mom, what does retarded mean? Someone at the camp said I was retarded."

Connie struggles with a response: "Anyone who would say that ... that's not a kind thing to say. You know what? Don't worry about that kind of stuff. It doesn't matter if you are slow, as long as you are doing your best."

They talk about God and how he made Adam the way he is for a reason. Adam likes that explanation. He'll keep that close and come back to it frequently in the coming years. He feels comforted and goes off to play. Connie stays behind to cry and pray.



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Adam Spinelli, left in both of the pictures above, and his brother Isaac don't have a lot of extra spending money. But they are creative in finding ways to enjoy life, such as savoring ice cream, checking out local live music at The Portal Cafe (where they are shown waiting before the place opens), smoking cigars, attending church, cooking hearty meals, playing video games and socializing at every opportunity. They particularly like to meet people and make new friends.

Middle finger extended

Every minute a green light releases a pack of about 40 cars eastbound from the intersection of Southeast Mill Plain Boulevard and Chkalov Drive — a spot Adam and Isaac regularly claim for their sign-shaking business. With sound reminiscent of ocean waves, this endless procession roars, pauses for a moment of silence, then roars again on this recent mid-morning.

Adam and Isaac try to attract attention in different ways. Adam uses a high-pitched hoot, makes eye contact, then frantically waves or gestures. Isaac prefers to be silent and steady, as if he's atop a parade float.

Most ignore — or avoid — them by singing along with the car stereo (or its variation, fiddling with the stereo's buttons and knobs); putting on makeup, lipstick usually, while looking into the rear-view mirror; sucking intently on a cigarette; or having an animated cellular telephone conversation. Every once in awhile, they get a less than positive critique. One middle-aged man in a minivan recently came to a stop near Adam and jabbed his arm and fist out of the window just low enough so his kids and wife couldn't see what he was doing. He then flicked up his middle finger and held it in that position until the light changed.

Such treatment comes with the job, says competitor Mike Pace, who dresses as the Cat in the Hat to shake signs for an apartment complex. That's part of the reason Pace, a retired baker earning extra spending money, won't work more than a three-hour shift two days a week. Both of the Spinellis will work two three-hour shifts each day, six days a week, to make ends meet.

The daily insults don't bother Pace much, he says. He worries about the people trying to peg him with lit cigarettes.

Quiznos manager Bowers says he tried out at least a half-dozen teenagers in the cup suit before discovering the Spinellis. They are good at what they do, Bowers says, and the brothers don't get discouraged by the tedium and harassment.

Isaac recalls the pelting he's taken by a handful of pennies



Stepfather Joseph Spinelli, center, gives Adam support and advice at a recent church service.

as well as a few individual coin missiles. A couple of months ago, when Adam was promoting an apartment complex by wearing a cow costume — complete with a large rubber udder on the front — someone stopped and offered to milk him. This past Christmas, someone threw a wrapped package at him. Adam opened it to discover only a pair of heavily soiled boxers.

Faith, friendships are focus

Adam and Isaac never work on Sundays. Any other day of the week, the Spinelli brothers might be out waving at cars. But never on Sundays, when they go to afternoon and evening services at Westminster Presbyterian Church in the old Cascade Park movie theater.

They usually walk the mile to the church. But since it might rain this time, friends Dave and Sabina Buhmaster pick them up in front of their east Vancouver apartment.

"The sunshine boys," Dave bellows as his minivan pulls into the parking lot. Sabina explains the nickname: "They don't see the clouds on a day like today. They see the sun."

Adam and Isaac soon are greeting people in the church's parking lot, then zealously circulating throughout the sanctuary. Isaac slaps high-fives with every kid, letting the curious ones rub his

recently shaved head. Adam flits from huddle to huddle. He addresses people by name. He looks in their eyes. He wants to know — really wants to know — how everyone is doing. When together, they often communicate in unison. One ends a sentence with "yeah," and the other one echoes as punctuation, "yeah."

Unlike the rest of their week, church is a busy intersection of people who look for and appreciate the Spinellis.

Stepfather Joseph Spinelli, a car salesman, marvels at how Adam and Isaac naturally and enthusiastically mingle.

"They don't know why people would be mean to one another," he says later. "They really love people. ... That's the beautiful part about them. That's their gift."

Extraordinarily irregular

Adam and Isaac excitedly call out to friend Joanna Kaufman and her 10-year-old son, Eli, at their apartment's swimming pool, not noticing the young couple in the water nearby bristling at their arrival. Working has given the brothers the means to live by themselves in this modern Cascade Park complex, with its numerous amenities. But that can't buy them acceptance.

Kaufman senses the discomfort level rising in the pool as the 20-year-olds begin to ges-

ture toward the brothers. She makes out a whispered "retard" as the two get out of the water, gather their things and leave. Unaware of the slight, Adam and Isaac try starting some small talk, but get little response from the couple, so they focus again on Kaufman and her son.

Eli's speech impediment makes school and finding friends difficult. Kaufman recalls how painful it was a year ago when a family moving into the complex wouldn't let their young boy play with Eli as the other mother explained to her son, in front of the heart-broken kid, that Eli's "too different."

Adam and Isaac visit the Kaufmans just about every morning before they leave for work, and they often return each night to play video games, share a meal or to initiate another pool party.

Not on the Fourth of July, though. That's reserved for a friend in northeast Portland. Adam and Isaac met Myron Tremblay, a supervisor for R&H Construction, a couple of years ago when he was working on a repair at their previous apartment. Instead of ignoring or avoiding Tremblay — as customers tend to do — the brothers began chatting with him, offering him macaroni and cheese on breaks and smoking cigars with him at the end of the workday.

Tremblay, in turn, took

them to a Portland Trail Blazers game, introduced them to his three children and began inviting Adam and Isaac over each year for Independence Day festivities.

"They are the life of the party," Tremblay says. "They show up early. They like everybody. It doesn't matter who you are or what you do. It just doesn't matter to them. Basically, (it all depends on) if you are going to accept them for who they are ... or not."

Filling more than a niche

Lori Funk, manager of The Barbers, marvels at what the Spinellis have meant for small businesses in her area of east Vancouver. Two guys who couldn't get jobs are now making a living perpetuating work for other people.

"When Isaac is out there (shaking signs in the morning), there's a steady flow (of customers)," says Funk, who pays the brothers \$10 an hour and gives them free haircuts. "When Adam gets out there (in the late afternoon), we get busy again."

Besides shaking The Barbers sign on a recent morning, Isaac alternates between waving and pretending to clip his blond shaved hair with his index and middle fingers.

On the other side of east Vancouver at about the same time, Adam is climbing into the cup costume for Quiznos. Maneuvering through the zipper, he pokes his legs into a couple of holes, exposing his jeans from the knees down, hems worn to tatters, and a pair of scuffed brown loafers. He pulls the harness over his shoulders and disappears inside of the rubberized cylinder, his smiling face replaced by the giant cartoonish one drawn onto the costume.

At first, the cup won't inflate properly. Adam's muffled voice sounds panicked. One of the Quiznos clerks, though, helps to locate tears in the material, covers those with tape, and the cup finally rises to its full height, punctuated by the extension of the red straw on top.

Adam thrusts both of his thumbs up in the air, then ambles out to his spot on South-east 164th Avenue. He's hopping, like he does every day, that someone will be nice and notice him.