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Dean forces oil platforms to close



What's on chron.com

Houston's sharpest eye on the storm

Eric Berger's blog is the place for tracking severe weather. Find reports on storm developments and projected paths.

■ Hurricane was expected to hit Mexico's Yucatan as a Category 5

By DUDLEY ALTHAUS, TERRI LANGFORD and ERIC BERGER HOUSTON CHRONICLE

With Hurricane Dean bearing down behind them Monday, oil workers shut down Gulf platforms and fled for land as tourists scrambled for the last flights out of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

Having veered far south of the premier tourist zones of Cancun and the Riviera Maya, Dean nevertheless will smash into communities that are home to some 500,000 people, about half of Quintana Roo's state population.

Boasting 145 mph sustained winds and gusts of up to 180 mph, Dean was expected to be a Category 5 storm when it made landfall

Please see DEAN, Page A4

NATION

Coming in for a landing

With seven aboard and a gouged heat shield, Endeavour is set to arrive at 11:32 a.m. today.

STORY ON PAGE A3

STAR

Homegrown talent shines

KATIE ARMIGER's pure vocals make her a country standout, while Astra Heights' rock is an homage to the Beatles, Queen and the Beach Boys.

STORIES ON PAGE E1



NEWSMAKERS

Helmsley dies at 87

Leona Helmsley, who went to prison for tax evasion, was called the "queen of mean."

STORY ON PAGE A2

City is now free to crack down on sex businesses

■ Panel upholds 1997 ordinance, but the clubs say they'll pursue a high court review

By MATT STILES HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Scores of topless clubs and other so-called sexually oriented businesses soon could be forced to close after a federal appeals court on Monday granted the city a significant victory in its decade-long legal battle to regulate the industry.

A three-judge panel from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld a city ordinance prohibiting the businesses from operating within 1,500 feet of sensitive sites, such as schools, churches, day care centers and parks.

Employees and owners in as many as 120 businesses operating in violation of the ordinance now face arrest.

Please see ORDINANCE, Page A8

Growth may trump water cleanup rules

■ 'Brownfields' up for redevelopment could get a pass on potability standard

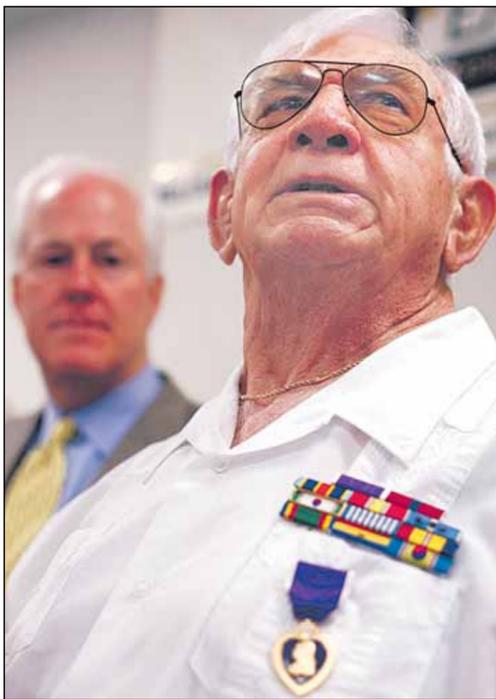
By CAROLYN FEIBEL HOUSTON CHRONICLE

How clean is clean? That's the question facing Houston as officials consider easing strict standards for cleaning up contaminated

groundwater. The plan, up for council vote Wednesday, is intended to help spur redevelopment of so-called "brownfields," former industrial properties with low levels of pollution.

A Superfund site in Westchase could be one of the first properties to be redeveloped if the city adopts the program. The now-defunct Crystal Chemical Company once manufactured herbicides on the 25-acre tract.

Please see COUNCIL, Page A4



STEVE UECKERT: CHRONICLE

This time, it was free

AFTER having to buy his own Purple Heart, Nyles Reed was given a second medal Monday by U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. Reed was wounded during the Korean War.

STORY ON PAGE B3

NFL'S VICK SAYS HE WILL PLEAD GUILTY

■ Facing possible prison time in dogfighting case, career is clouded with uncertainty

By MARK MASKE and JERRY MARKON WASHINGTON POST

Michael Vick agreed Monday to plead guilty to the federal dogfighting charges against him, a move that could land the Atlanta Falcons star quarterback in prison and leaves his once-dynamic football career shrouded in uncertainty.

Vick is scheduled to appear Monday in U.S. District Court in Richmond, Va., according to his attorneys and the court's docket. People familiar with the case said he is expected to plead guilty to a single conspiracy count and that the recommended sentencing guideline range will be 12 to 18

months in prison. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the plea deal's terms were not publicly announced.

"Michael is prepared to take full responsibility for allowing any and all of this to happen," Vick's Washington, D.C.-based attorney, William R. (Billy) Martin, said Monday. "He needs to put all of this behind him. He's 27 years old and he has a full life ahead of him. He wants to get back to the life he had before."

That might not be possible. Vick's fall from the top ranks of NFL stars is one of the most precipitous ever for an athlete in the prime of his playing career. And it raises questions of whether Vick will play again, because he faces possible discipline by the NFL under the

Please see VICK, Page A4

'SICKENING'

Columnist John Lopez says very little good comes from Vick's fall from glory.

PAGE C1

WEIGHT-LOSS CAMP

Fresh from a summer transformation, Isabel embarks on a new challenge — navigating high school life

Maintaining success



SHARON STEINMANN: CHRONICLE

WORN OUT: Isabel Hernandez, center, takes a breather during a kickboxing class at Camp Wellspring.

Editor's note: This is the final story in a three-part series. Isabel Hernandez didn't want to start her freshman year at Katy's Morton Ranch High School the same way she left middle school: barely 5 feet tall and nearly 180 pounds. So this June, she left for weight-loss camp in San Marcos, hoping to shed enough pounds to shop at trendy stores with her skinnier friends. She and nearly 80 campers spent their days exercising and watching every bite. Isabel started to shed pounds, met a boy she liked and found friends who understood her.

By SARAH VIREN HOUSTON CHRONICLE

SAN MARCOS — A digital camera did her in. Either that or teenage bravado. Four weeks into her eight-week stint at weight-loss camp, Isabel Hernandez almost got kicked out.

She kissed a boy she liked named Brandon. They were in a van heading to a hike. Someone snapped an image of their locked lips and Isabel showed it to her favorite

counselor. Three days later, both were facing expulsion from the camp, which forbids both violence and romance. Either offense, counselors had told the kids the first weeks, are distractions from the task at hand — losing weight.

The two weren't the only pairing. By the time Isabel and Brandon started trading love notes, at least six other campers had coupled up, according to Isabel's count.

But if the others kissed, they had done so secretly. That

just wasn't Isabel's style. Quitting wasn't her style either.

So when the counselors offered her a deal, she took it. She could stay on, they said, but her rank would drop in the camp's "summit" system, in which kids get rewards as they progress through the levels — novice, boulder, ascender and vallyer — in the Wellspring camp system.

By the time parents arrived to take campers home, Isabel still ranked as a novice. But her

Please see CAMP, Page A8

What's on chron.com

LANDRY'S REACHES DEAL WITH BONDHOLDERS

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