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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2003

dailyillini.com VOL. 133 ISSUE 41



The Associated Press

Acting as his own attorney, sniper suspect John Allen Muhammad handles a rifle sight telescope during cross examination of British Army sniper expert Sgt. Maj. Mark Spicer during his trial at the Virginia Beach Circuit Court in Virginia Beach, Va., on Monday.

Sniper suspect serves as own lawyer

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (AP) — Sniper suspect John Allen Muhammad won the right to act as his own lawyer Monday in a surprise, last-minute request at his murder trial, then broke a year of stony silence with a rambling opening statement in which he assured jurors, "I had nothing to do with these crimes."

It was not clear why Muhammad decided to fire his lawyers, who will serve as standby counsel. Just last week, Muhammad told Circuit Judge LeRoy F. Millette Jr. that he was satisfied with his attorneys.

"One of the things we're here

for today is to find out what everyone wants to know. What happened?" Muhammad told the jury at the outset of his 20-minute statement. He talked about the meaning of truth but said nothing about the shootings except to deny involvement.

"I know what happened. I know what didn't happen. They're basing what they said about me on a theory," he told jurors. "If we monitor (the evidence) step by step, it will all show I had nothing to do with these crimes."

Muhammad, 42, is charged in the slaying of Dean Harold Mey-

ers, a 53-year-old Vietnam veteran who was gunned down outside a northern Virginia gas station last October. He was the seventh victim of a three-week shooting spree that left 10 people dead in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

Muhammad and fellow suspect Lee Boyd Malvo, 18, were arrested last Oct. 24 at a highway rest stop in Maryland. Prosecutors have said the shootings were part of a plot to extort \$10 million from the government.

Prosecutors say Malvo has made several statements to police and jail guards in which he con-

fessed involvement in many of last fall's sniper shootings in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. Muhammad barely spoke to investigators, and offered only terse, one-word answers to questions in many pre-trial hearings.

Now Muhammad will have to speak for himself and could cross-examine his accusers, possibly including survivors of the sniper shootings.

Muhammad spoke at length during his opening statement about the meaning of truth, saying at one point, "Jesus said, 'Ye shall know the truth.'" He also

said he hopes to be found innocent "by the grace of Allah."

"There's three truths. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I always thought there was just one truth," he said. "The facts should help us identify what's a lie, what's not a lie," he said.

He also spoke about his children, whom he said he "loves very much."

He said he once punished his daughter for eating chocolate cookies, only to find out later that the daughter had not disobeyed him. Similarly, he said,

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FRESHMAN SLEEPOUT



SHIRA WEISSMAN The Daily Illini

(From front) Freshmen Rob Kohen, applied life studies, Jason Shiffman, business, Andy Franklin, LAS, and Michael Arbus, LAS, lie on the Quad on Monday afternoon. The group decided to sleep on the Quad Monday night after seeing the idea listed in the I-Book as something to do before graduation. "It should be fun," said Shiffman. "It's going to be really nice out."

UI professor exposes online diploma mills

BY BETH HURTUBISE
Staff writer

While some people benefit from Web sites that offer high school and college degrees through the Internet for little or no work, other people — including one University professor — are concerned that degrees provided by unaccredited institutions are making job applicants appear more qualified than they really are.

George Gollin, a University physics professor, said online degrees were first brought to his attention in the form of pop-up Internet windows.

He said it was particularly annoying because the advertisements appeared two or three times a day and were difficult to ignore. Gollin called to complain,

but ultimately just left a message. Upon receiving a response, Gollin learned that he could buy a diploma for a second doctorate degree from this company for a couple thousand dollars. They would also provide letters of recommendation and a transcript.

Gollin was concerned by this and decided to research Parkwood University and other unaccredited universities.

Every legitimate learning institution in the United States is approved by an independent agency called the Council of

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GEORGE GOLLIN

5 dead after Israeli airstrikes hit Gaza

NUSSEIRAT REFUGEE CAMP, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli warplanes and helicopters pounded Palestinian targets in the Gaza Strip on Monday, killing 11 people, including eight in a refugee camp where a car was bombed. One missile exploded on a street crowded with schoolchildren, wounding four of them.

The airstrikes came a day after Palestinian militants fired eight homemade rockets from Gaza into southern Israel and Palestinian gunmen ambushed an Israeli patrol in the West Bank, killing three soldiers.

The violent Islamic movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad threatened revenge, and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pledged more raids, further clouding Mideast peace efforts.

"The Israeli military will continue to act to foil terror attacks, capture murderers and liquidate terror organizations," Sharon said in a speech to parliament.

Israeli aircraft struck five times Monday, hitting a suspected Hamas weapons cache twice, another storehouse and a car carrying suspected militants.

The deadliest attack came after nightfall in the Nusseirat refugee

camp in central Gaza. Residents said Israeli helicopters fired three missiles at the main street, destroying a car.

Residents said one of the dead was a doctor who was treating victims when a second missile struck. The identity of the other victims was not immediately known, and the military did not comment.

Hundreds of camp residents carried charred pieces of the vehicle aloft and chanted, "Revenge, revenge."

Israel's Channel 10 TV said none of the dead were militants, characterizing the refugee camp strike as a "mistake."

In Gaza City, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at a building in the Shajaiyeh neighborhood, the same structure that was hit in an earlier airstrike Monday, residents said. Eleven people were wounded, they said. Israeli military sources said the attack was meant to finish the work of the first one.

The first three airstrikes destroyed two weapons labs and warehouses of Hamas, the military said. Four children and a 70-year-old woman were among 23 wounded. Two missiles exploded

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Harvest continues at Morrow Plots

Despite recent vandalism to crop, UI researchers able to collect data

BY LAUREN MATTHES
Staff writer

Despite recent vandalism, University of Illinois researchers are still able to harvest and obtain adequate data from the Morrow Plots.

Since the 25-foot crop circle was at the intersection of four subplots, adjustments were made to stay out of the affected area,

said Robert Dunker, a University agronomist in crop sciences who heads research and harvesting of the plots.

"We had to use different techniques and move the harvest data slightly off of the two rows we would have normally taken," Dunker said.

Although valuable data was not lost, researchers did lose time and effort by having to physical-

ly handpick every ear of corn off of the stalks that were stomped down, he said.

"Primarily the damage is more of a vandalism thing, than it was losing valuable data," he said.

As a measure to prevent future vandalism, a 24-hour surveillance camera will be mounted on Mumford Hall and signs will be posted, Dunker said. There is an active Web camera that is on

during the day now, but turned off at night, he said.

"What (the vandals) may see as a simple prank ... as something fun, could have actually had some severe implications if there would have been the loss of 12 years of data," Dunker said.

Since the three plots are only planted with all corn every six years, a 12-year gap would have

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The ballots of choice

[PAPER BALLOT] → First used in Australia in 1857 then introduced to the U.S. in 1889, they are now used by only 1.7 percent of our voting population.	● Mechanical lever machines first appeared in New York in 1892. Once the primary voting method, these machines are now out of production. ← [M]
[PUNCH CARDS] → Voters select their candidate by punching out the corresponding hole. These were made famous by the butterfly ballots of the controversial 2000 election.	● This system of optical scanning functions with lasers reading circles or squares darkened by the voter. It is used by 25 percent of modern voters. ← [MARKSENSE]
[DRE] → The direct recording electronic method allows voters to select a candidate by using a touch-screen. This method is used by 8 percent of voters.	● This old fashioned method is used in town meetings to pass local legislation by a show of hands and is used mainly in New England. ← [HAND COUNT]

Source: Family Education Network
Daily Illini Graphic by Prashant Mehta

Local voting methods may change by 2006

Cook, Champaign counties hope to replace punch card ballots with scanners, touch screens

BY TINA SHAH
Staff writer

Cook County and Champaign County voting committees are both hoping to replace punch card ballots with either an optical scanner or a touch screen by 2006.

Champaign County Clerk Mark Sheldon has been looking into an alternative voting method to punch cards for the last three years. Accuracy in counting ballots and convenience for voters are some of the main reasons for the push toward a newer, computerized voting system.

But the county is facing a tight budget until 2006.

"We have had a deficit of \$1.5 million for the last two to three years," Sheldon said. He said getting the necessary \$500,000 for new voting equipment will take time.

Sheldon said he does not think the number of registered voters in Champaign County, about 100,000 people, would change with a new voting process.

Although the county receives some state funding, Sheldon said it is not enough for all the necessary equipment.

Champaign City Councilman

We have had a deficit of \$1.5 million for the last two to three years.

MARK SHELDON
Champaign County Clerk, explaining why new methods will have to wait until 2006

Tom Bruno said "there is a potential for error in all systems," so a change would not necessarily improve accuracy.

Most voting polls have anywhere from 500 to 800 voters, but some have only 100, which is not a large amount to count, Bruno said.

"The society is just becoming impatient," he added.

Scott Burnham, director of

communications with the Cook County Clerk's office, said Cook County is likely to move from using punch card ballots — which they have used since 1976 — to a new system by 2006, if the money is available.

"Both the optical and touch screen have pros and cons," Burnham said. Because the Cook County ballots are especially

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