

Mission supplies gifts for Lincoln's needy

The People's City Mission, 124 S. Ninth St., will have an Open Shopping Time for members of low income families. Family members can pick out gifts from a selection of new and used items.

Shopping dates are: Dec. 15 and 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Dec. 19 and 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Those wishing to donate items can contact Karen Magwire or Gerry Ann Ortega at 475-1303.

Overwork dismissed as reason For space gripes, NASA heads say

HOUSTON, (Reuter) — Astronaut Robert Parker griped to ground control again Wednesday, but it was dismissed as a manifestation of his personality, not the result of frustration or fatigue.

When a ground controller told him to perform an apparently redundant operation, he questioned why. The controller replied he "was just following orders."

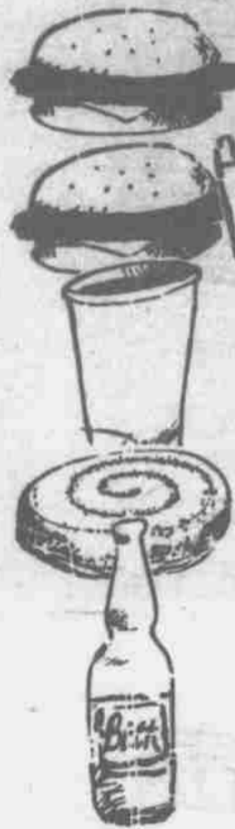
"I'll follow instructions OK but I think it is a bunch of crap about a bunch of nothing," Parker complained.

"That's just Bob Parker," chief mission scientist Richard Chappell explained later when asked if the crew was being overworked or was getting tired.

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Off The Wire

National and international news from the Reuter News Report

Syria: Air strikes 'acts of aggression'

UNITED NATIONS — Syria said Wednesday that the U.S. air strikes Sunday against Syrian positions in Lebanon were not defensive, as Washington has said, but acts of aggression.

"It is cause for astonishment and wonder," Syrian U.N. representative Dia Allah El-Fattal said, "that the United States delegation interprets its acts of aggression as self-defense." Fattal's accusation, in a letter to council President Max van der Stoep of the Netherlands, was an answer to a letter to the council on Monday by U.S. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick's letter said the air strikes, in which two American planes were shot down, were a response to Syrian missile fire the day before against U.S. aircraft on a reconnaissance flight over Lebanon.

In Lebanon, Syrian forces Wednesday handed over the body of Lt. Mark Lange, a 26-year-old Navy pilot who died when his plane was shot down. Lange was on a bombing raid against Syrian positions in Lebanon's central mountains. His navigator-bombardier, Lt. Robert Goodman, parachuted to the ground and was captured by the Syrians. He has not been released.

92 die in airport collision

MADRID, Spain — Two Spanish airliners collided in thick fog in Madrid's Barajas Airport, killing 92 people, an official spokesman said. Airport authorities said a Rome-bound Boeing 727 of the national airline Iberia was moving off the runway at about 200 mph when an Aviac DC-9 taxied into its path. The DC-9's fuel tanks exploded and fire broke out as the planes collided.

A spokesman for emergency services said 44 of the 135 people aboard the two jets survived the crash but one died later in a hospital. There was still some doubt over the final death toll because some passengers who escaped unharmed were believed to have gone home without contacting authorities, he added.

The collision came 10 days after a Boeing 747 of the Colombian airline Avianca crashed on its approach to the airport, killing 181 people.

Shultz ready to talk

BONN, West Germany — Secretary of State George Shultz said Wednesday he would be more than ready to meet Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at an East-West disarmament conference in Stockholm next month. Shultz said at a press conference that the United States is ready for "any constructive dialogue" with Moscow and expressed regret over the Soviet walk-out last month at Geneva talks on medium-range nuclear missiles.

Ling-Ling may be dying

WASHINGTON — Ling-Ling, one of two giant pandas given to former President Nixon by the Chinese government as a mark of improved relations between the countries, may be near death, National Zoo authorities said Wednesday. Zoo spokesman Robert Hoage said the 14-year-old female panda was suffering from kidney problems and anemia and prospects for her recovery were not good. Giant pandas have a life span of about 20 years. Hoage said Ling-Ling Tuesday was given antibiotics and a blood transfusion from her mate, Hsing-Hsing. The pandas have been a huge draw at the zoo since they arrived in 1972, and the media have followed closely their attempted matings. Last July, Ling-Ling delivered a male cub, which died several hours after birth.

Wazzan will stay on

BEIRUT, Lebanon — President Amin Gemayel declined Prime Minister Shafiq al-Wazzan's resignation Wednesday and persuaded him to stay on, officials said. Wazzan said after a cabinet meeting that he would continue in office until Gemayel completes a new round of consultation with the leaders of Lebanon's warring groups. He had tried to resign weeks ago, after the Sept. 26 cease-fire agreement between the army and rival militias, but Gemayel talked him out of it then, too.

As the two leaders met, shells crashed in East Beirut in an outbreak of fighting in the mountains between the Lebanese army and Druse Moslem militias, security sources said.

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