

LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS

Woman Sentenced for Attacking Tourist at Coffee Bean

A 40-year-old woman entered a no contest plea today for attacking a female tourist sitting with her family at The Coffee Bean in downtown Santa Monica, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Deputy District Attorney Eva Jabber Stodel said Sara Christine Rizo of Redondo Beach entered the plea to one count of felony assault by means likely to produce great bodily injury.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Mark Windham of the Airport Branch immediately sentenced Rizo to 494 days in county jail, already served, five years formal probation, one year of residential psychiatric treatment. The judge also ordered Rizo to stay out of any coffee houses and to pay restitution to the victim in the amount of \$9,500.

On June 9, 2015, Rizo went into a coffee shop at 2nd Street and Santa Monica Boulevard and began yelling profanities, the prosecutor said. Rizo later grabbed a customer by her hair and yanked it backward, causing the victim to fall and suffer a fractured vertebrae in her neck, the prosecutor added.

Suicide Threat Closes Courthouse

A manthreatening suicide on the front lawn of the Santa Monica Courthouse on Tuesday morning, briefly caused police to close the building. He was taken into police custody, and the lockdown ended.

The incident started at around 8:15 a.m. when the man allegedly drove a pick-up truck onto the lawn of the courthouse, located at 1725 Main St., Santa Monica police Officer Robert Sparks said.

After about 30 minutes of talking to the man, the incident ended and the lockdown ended.

Police released no information on whether the man has any weapons, his age or description. He was taken to UCLA Medical Center for evaluation, a watch commander said.

Building under Construction near Beach Collapses in Storm

On Sunday March 6, at 2:30 PM, Santa Monica Fire Department was alerted to a possible structural collapse situation at 160 Hart Avenue, in the Ocean Park Beach Front area.

When the Fire Department arrived, they found a four level apartment building, under construction, with scaffolding surrounding it.

Heavy winds, associated with the days passing weather front had broken a large section of scaffolding loose, threatening the small residence next door.

The first Fire Department unit, "activated a USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) alarm, and received aid from the Fire Department's most specialized Heavy Recue resources; The USAR Rescue Truck, and the Ladder Truck," said the SMFD. "These units were able dismantle portions of the scaffolding, and hoist other parts back into the apartment building under construction. The Battalion Chief on scene reported no injuries, and minimal damage to the neighboring structure."



Time Running Out To Charge Anyone Who Helped Gangster

Investigators who spent years building a criminal case against gangster James "Whitey" Bulger have long believed he had multiple helpers when he fled Boston and went on the run.

But if prosecutors don't bring charges within the next few months, the only person to be charged with actually assisting the notorious crime boss during his 16 years as a fugitive will be his longtime girlfriend.

The statute of limitations for harboring a fugitive is five years. The clock began ticking when Bulger was captured in Santa Monica, California, on June 22, 2011, and runs out on June 22, 2016.

Catherine Greig, who accompanied Bulger on his long flight from justice, was sentenced to eight years in prison for helping him. Greig faces additional prison time after pleading guilty last month to contempt for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating who else may have helped Bulger.

Bulger, now 86, is serving a life sentence after being convicted of a litany of crimes during a 2013 rack-teering trial, including participating in 11 murders.

Over the years, investigators suspected Bulger received help from his family, and attention focused on his brother, William Bulger, a powerful political figure who was president of the state Senate for 17 years.

But William Bulger has denied helping his brother while he was a fugitive and has never been charged. In testimony before a federal grand jury in 2001, William Bulger acknowledged that he and his brother spoke by phone shortly after he fled Boston in late 1994.

"I don't feel an obligation to help everyone catch him," he said, according to leaked transcripts of testimony published in The Boston Globe.

Another brother, John "Jackie" Bulger, pleaded guilty to perjury and obstruction of justice in 2003 for lying to federal grand juries. Jackie Bulger admitted he had spoken to his brother while he was a fugitive. He also admitted lying when he testified he had no knowledge about a safe deposit box owned by his brother.

Greig's twin sister, Margaret McCusker, pleaded guilty to lying to a grand jury about having contact with her sister after she fled Boston with Bulger.

Kevin Weeks, a key Bulger henchman, admitted that he provided Bulger with fake identification while he was on the run. Weeks, who testified against Bulger, served five years in prison for being an accessory to five murders, but was not charged with helping Bulger as a fugitive.

With Greig refusing to testify, another key question could remain unanswered: where is the money investigators believe Bulger hid?

While Bulger was a fugitive, the FBI seized cash and other items from safe deposit boxes in Florida, London, Canada and Ireland. Investigators believe that was just a fraction of the money Bulger made through his gang's illegal activities. When Bulger and Greig were captured, authorities found \$822,000 in cash in their apartment. Prosecutors have said they will divide that among the families of Bulger's victims.

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City of Hope

Irwindale

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Metro Briefs

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL

Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension Now in Service

Metro's Gold Line Foothill Extension officially opened March 5, with large crowds coming out to enjoy live music, food trucks and more at the new Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte/ City of Hope, Irwindale and Azusa Downtown Stations. The 11.5-mile rail line extension connects East Pasadena to Azusa and points in between, providing a relaxing and money-saving alternative to driving the busy 210 Freeway. Rediscover Gold at metro.net/moregold.

Expo Line Phase 2 Opens May 20

Metro recently announced that the Expo Line Phase 2 will officially open May 20, 2016. The 6.6-mile extension will stretch from Culver City to Santa Monica. Once complete, the Expo Line will offer a faster alternative to the congested Santa Monica Freeway, with train passengers being able to travel between Downtown LA and Downtown Santa Monica in approximately 46 minutes. Learn more at metro.net/expo2.

VetsGo511.com

VetsGo511.com is a one-stop source for veterans and others in the military community to get help with transportation options, housing, employment, healthcare and more. To learn more, visit vetsgo511.com.


Regional Connector Project Construction Update

Construction of the Regional Connector Project is underway. When traveling to downtown LA, Little Tokyo or the Arts District, please plan ahead to avoid delays. Once completed, this Metro Rail extension will provide a one-seat ride for travel across LA. For details, visit metro.net/regionalconnector.

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