



Local cat sweeps recall

After weeks of counting, Nigel wins, taking twice the votes of second place

By Tad Ramspott
Journal Political Writer

Nigel the AIDS Kitty is now more than just a symbol of hope for feline leukemia sufferers — he is also the new governor of California.

In a completely unexpected twist to the October 7 recall race, California Secretary of State Kevin Shelley announced Thursday that Nigel came in first place for the hotly contested seat, earning 0.000025 percent of the popular vote. His two votes — which were both recorded in Placer County — beat out the single vote recorded by each of the other 7,913,244 declared and undeclared candidates.

“Dear lord, we’ve just elected a cat to run California,” Shelley said in a press conference in Sacramento, shortly before walking off the podium without answering reporters’ questions.

Nearby, Republican candidate Darrell Issa, the primary financier of the recall effort, could be heard pounding his head against a wall and sobbing. He declined comment on Nigel’s victory.

Nearly eight million voters went to the polls. With 100 percent of precincts finally reporting over two weeks after the election, 53.4 percent of voters answered yes on the first question of the recall, ousting Gray Davis from the governor’s office. But the second question, that of who to elect in his place, was far more complex — and the source of the election’s delays.

“I think future generations will agree that the California Supreme Court decision allowing write-in votes on the recall ballot was and will continue to be this century’s biggest political mistake,” University of Southern California political analyst Sherry Bebitch Jeffe said.



BEN FURTADO/JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Nigel the AIDS Kitty, shown in this November 2002 file photo, was announced Thursday to have won California’s recall election to replace Gov. Gray Davis.

The decision was partly a move of convenience, with 522 candidates having filed papers by the August 9 deadline. Rather than use a nine-page ballot form, the state installed an electronic voting system that allowed voters to type the name of their preferred candidate. A subsequent lawsuit established that write-in votes could not be excluded.

State officials realized with horror in the days following the special election that every single voter at the polls apparently had typed in his or her own name in response to the question worded “Who do you want to be the next governor of California?” But the prospect of a 7,913,246-person runoff election was avoided when they realized belatedly that two voters had agreed on Nigel.

Nigel, a two-year resident of The Cat House in north Auburn, seemed confident as he prepared to step up to the state’s highest leadership position. “Mew,” he said. In Sacramento, workers immediately began installation of a scratching post in the Capitol, while legislative leaders tried to puzzle out who would be responsible for feeding Nigel and cleaning his litter box. In a 91-1 vote, litter-box duty was given to Issa, R-Vista.

Issa declined comment, but could later be heard pounding his head on the wall and sobbing.

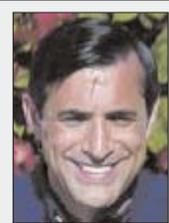
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More Inside

Full voting results
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Nigel at a glance

Full name: Nigel the AIDS Kitty
Age: Unknown
Residence: The Cat House, Auburn
Fur: Orange and white
Eyes: Blue
Married?: No
Cute: Yes
Previous political experience: None
Suffers from: Feline leukemia, also known as ‘Kitty AIDS.’ The disease can be passed between cats through blood or saliva, but is not infectious to humans
To adopt: Call Friends of the Placer County Animal Shelter at (530) 887-5520. Other cats are also available



“...”

— Darrell Issa, R-Vista, upon hearing the news that Nigel had been elected governor, shortly before starting to pound his head on the wall and cry

Median housing price rises

Journal Staff Report

Placer County’s median housing price rose again in September, county officials reported, continuing a steady 32-year trend and breaking a record that had been set just 30 days ago.

The median price, now at \$1,135,004, was driven largely by growth in Lincoln, although all areas of the county benefited from sustained interest in the foothills, Placer County Economic Analyst Eric Throckmorton said.

“Lincoln prices were up 4.1 percent this month,” Throckmorton said. “That contributed significantly to the county’s average rise of 2.2 percent.

So did developers’ complete stonewalling on affordable housing. Oops, did I just say that? Was that my outside voice?”

Realtors hailed the rise as indicative of the Auburn area’s great reputation.

“The less that people can afford to live here, the more exclusive the area gets,” Realtor Kenny Bellwether said. “The more exclusive the area gets, the more people are willing to pay for that exclusivity. Pretty soon you won’t be able to get a house for less than seven digits. Of course, since my profit margins come as a percentage of the house’s sale price,

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Iraq post-war toll may have passed war toll

By Ramza Beoulve

Associated Press Tactical Correspondent

BAGHDAD — With the ramming of a soldier’s patrol Humvee on Thursday evening by a suicide bomber in an Iraqi taxi, Pfc. Delita Hyral became the 231st U.S. casualty since President Bush declared war in Iraq on March 19.

When Bush declared major combat over on May 1, the death toll stood at 115. The 116 post-war deaths now outnumber the war casualty figure, some military analysts and troops argue.

“It’s simple mathematics,” said Mustadio Bunanza, an engineer with the Third Air Corps, Fifth Division, currently stationed in Fallujah. “It doesn’t take a Calculator to know that 116 is more than 115. Too many teammates have died. We need bigger squads than five people.”

But the White House disputed this in a press conference Thursday.

“There is no there there. This isn’t the smoking gun. We will find the WMDs, and the details of current military operations must remain classified,” Donald Rumsfeld said in response to the first syllable of a question that a reporter attempted to ask. “Any allegations of increased casualties are false. Why do you believe this? Do you hate America?”

House and Senate Democrats denounced the White House explanation as “yet more ineffectual maneu-



CIDOLFAS ORLANDU/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. soldiers Pvt. Alqus Sadalfas, right, Capt. Gaff Gafgarion, left, and Pvt. Malak Galthana, background, continue to guard strategic sites Friday in Baghdad, like they’ve been doing since May.

vering for political gain,” and called for an immediate congressional investigation into whether the post-war death toll of 116 was in fact more than the war death toll of 115.

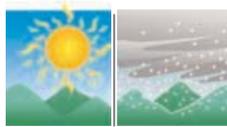
President Bush, on an extended three-month vacation at his Texas ranch, told reporters that “Americans, now more than ever, need to be concerned with supporting our troops overseas, and can rest

assured that all of our sacrifices will be worth it once Iraq’s democratic government is finally installed sometime in 2009.”

Meanwhile in Baghdad, the search for Saddam continued, with troops reporting two more miles of hidden tunnels clear of booby-traps. Despite the reward for Saddam being increased to \$45 million, no leads

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WEATHER



Desert heat, hail, and plagues of frogs
High 106, low -9.

LETTER QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Whatever happens with the recall results will serve those scheming Republicans right.”

— Lon Rowe, Grass Valley

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