

Condoleeza Rice Visits France

SECRETARY of State Condoleeza Rice met with French President Jacques Chirac on March 30 during her three-day European tour. Her visit with the president, which lasted an hour and a half at L'Elysée palace, primarily focused on the issue of Iran's nuclear program. Elysée spokesman, Jérôme Bonnafont, stated that the president continued to express concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Chirac told Rice that he was satisfied with United Nations Security Council's presidential statement urging Iran to abandon its enrichment activities; a signal that reflects a unanimous view by the international community. In addition, Rice and Chirac discussed Israeli-Palestinian relations following the Palestinian elections in January and the recent Israeli elections.



Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and French President Jacques Chirac

Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, to congratulate him on his win and extended an invitation to meet with him in Paris. The president also reiterated the conditions that the Palestinian government must meet in order to establish dialogue with the Quartet: recognizing Israel, halting violence, and recognizing the Oslo Accords as well as the peace agreements met thereafter.

The final topic discussed was the U.N. Security Council's resolutions pertaining to Lebanon. The president concluded the meeting by underlining the convergence of policy between the United States and France and expressed his desire to maintain dialogue between the two countries. ■ ■

Prior to their meeting, Chirac had called newly elected Israeli

French Trade Minister Visits the United States

CHRISTINE Lagarde, Trade Minister of France, traveled across the United States to meet with members of the press and business communities from April 5 through 13. On April 7, after having stopped in New York and before heading to Chicago and San Francisco, Lagarde spoke to an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C.



Trade Minister of France, Christine Lagarde

In her CSIS address, titled "France: A Paradise for Foreign Investors?" Lagarde discussed clichés about France, the challenges of globalization, France's emphasis on innovation, and the strength of French businesses.

After evoking Alexis de Tocqueville's notion of France as a paradoxical nation, Lagarde emphasized a need to "enlarge the spectrum" to see beyond clichés.

"With an openness ratio of 22 percent, France is one of the most open countries in the world," Lagarde said. "Many French busi-

nesses are established on all continents, and France has eight companies among the 100 largest in the world." explained that France's hourly labor productivity is two percent higher than in the U.S. and 16 percent higher than the European average, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Finally, Lagarde addressed the "World Bank 'Doing Business' report," which praises France for how easy the nation makes it for incoming businesses.

Citing the TGV, Ariane rocket, and Airbus aircraft as examples, Lagarde emphasized France's various industrial strengths. "France is at the cutting edge of technological research and innovation in a host of areas," she said.

To this end, the French government has created: a National Research Agency to finance challenging research projects; an Industrial Innovation Industry to help technological businesses; and 66 competitive "clusters" of businesses, training institutes, and research centers to help make French businesses even more competitive.

Lagarde, a lawyer who specializes in antitrust and labor law, has been Trade Minister since June 2005. She has been named *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*, and Forbes magazine ranked her 88 on the list of the world's 100 most powerful women in 2005. ■ ■

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AMERICANS RECEIVE LEGION OF HONOR

Two distinguished Americans were recently awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest distinction. Jerry Lewis, the American actor and comedian, received this honor from Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, France's cultural minister. De Vabres celebrated Lewis's fruitful and accomplished career.

The award was also received by Norman Mailer, American author and innovator of the nonfiction novel. In the 1960s and 1970s, Norman Mailer was credited with developing a type of journalism that combines actual events, autobiography, and political commentary in a unique literary form.

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RADIO FRANCE

French public radio is about to launch a new set of podcasts that will be called "baladodiffusion." April 21 is the deadline for each contestant to submit their original, unedited podcast. A jury composed of Radio France employees will choose the best 52 authors of the podcasts, whose theme will be "texts with a musical ambiance." Soon afterward, Radio France will offer the winning works for downloading on iTunes.

FLAVORED FRENCH WINE

The French government announced on March 29 that it will soon allow wine producers to flavor their wine with wood shavings. This development will aid the industry financially in a time when international competition is fierce. However, the decision is being contested by some frustrated traditionalists.



Oak Wine Barrels

Until recently, almost all French wine producers were "purists." In light of decreasing revenues in recent years due to the cost of using traditional methods, many producers are expressing interest in gaining access to the same techniques as their international competitors. The wood chips in question give the wine an oak flavor, without the cost of using expensive wooden barrels. Such cost-cutting techniques are used in many other parts of the world, including Australia, South America, and North America.

UBISOFT ACQUIRES "FAR CRY"

On March 29, French Company Ubisoft announced that it will acquire the intellectual property rights of the company Far Cry. Ubisoft is one of the largest video game—editing companies in the world. This transition will consolidate Ubisoft's market share as the leader of the video game domain. They will now own the rights to appearances, copyrights, and characters of Far Cry's video game. Ubisoft also reserves the right to further develop and make additions to existing characters.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / April 12, 2006

France Sends 500 Troops to Congo

FRENCH Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy announced on March 20 that France will provide 500 troops for an E.U. backed military mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to help maintain peace during elections in June. The decision to send a European force was made following the United Nations' request help to provide a secure environment for voters. This year will mark the first democratic elections in the DRC since it gained its independence from Belgium in 1961.

Germany is expected to contribute approximately 500 personnel as well, making France and Germany the backbone of the



French soldier

effort. Ten E.U. countries are expected to contribute smaller numbers of troops, including Spain, Poland, Sweden, and Belgium. The German military will command the overall mission from a headquarters based in the German city of Potsdam, while France has offered to head operations on-site in the DRC capital of Kinshasa. The troops will spend approximately 4 months in the country to support the 17,000 United Nations soldiers who are currently stationed there for peacekeeping operations. ■

Joint French - Indian Military Training Exercises

THE navies of France and India recently resumed joint military operational exercises in a move to strengthen ties between the two countries. The exercises, part of a series called Varuna, took place off the coast of Goa, in western India from the end of March through April 7.

"This is operational. The aim for this operation is to build up understanding between the two navies," Indian Navy spokesman Captain Abhay Lambhate said.

The exercises included aircraft carriers, guided-missile destroyers and submarines. One major focus was placed on the DACT, Dissimilar Air Combat, which involves coordinated missile-firing from the aircraft carriers. Other areas of concentration involved fleet air defense, anti-submarine warfare, maritime operations, search and seizure procedures, and tactical maneuvers.

This year's exercises will mark the first time the Indian Air Force (IAF) took part in Varuna. The two navies have conducted the Varuna joint exercises once a year since 2001. Last year, they took place in the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Djibouti.

This year's Varuna exercises follow French President Jacques Chirac's visit to India from February 19 to 21, to strengthen the ties between the two countries (see *NFF* 06.02). ■

NUCLEAR RESEARCH DEAL SIGNED

France and Libya signed an accord on March 15 in Tripoli agreeing to collectively pursue peaceful nuclear research projects, marking an important new direction for relations between the two countries. It is the first deal of its kind since Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi abandoned efforts to build weapons of mass destruction in 2003.

The accord foresees research in the field of radioactive isotopes used for medical and industrial purposes, the desalination of ocean water through nuclear techniques, and the training of nuclear specialists and technicians. The French Commission on Atomic Energy will be regulating the exchanges in collaboration with French company Areva, which will focus on the industrial aspects. Various Lebanese energy agencies will also participate in overseeing the projects.

France and Libya have recently taken several steps toward deepening bilateral relations. French President Jacques Chirac made an official visit to Libya in November 2004 and outlined the future of Franco-Libyan cooperation. The two countries agreed to engage in more dialogue on areas of common interest, such as issues concerning the Mediterranean Sea and Africa, improving economic ties and encouraging bilateral trade. Most recently, Foreign Affairs Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy spent several days in Libya in January 2006 to meet with Prime Minister Shukri Ghanem.

Biking Around the World

FRENCH firefighter, Laurent Robin, and fiancée, Laurie Vuillermet, have travelled throughout Europe, Australia, South America, and now North America - on bicycles

to raise money and awareness for one little French girl named Chloé (see page 8 for picture). Born in 2001, Chloé suffers from a severe form of epilepsy called West Syndrome, a rare neurological disease that causes spasms and impairs natural development. As a five-year-old, Chloé is just learning to crawl and can say words such as "Papa" and "Maman." Robin and Vuillermet, who are friends of Chloé's parents, are attempting to raise money so that Chloé can receive a treatment that will require her to apply her sense of touch

in order for her to gain mobility. This method, called patterning, costs approximately \$17,000 per year and is not covered under regular insurance. "Chloe's parents were devastated when they found out about her disease and Laurent wanted to do something for her," said Vuillermet. The couple travels from one fire station to the next fundraising for Chloé since "all firemen are one big family." The couple has already stayed in 190 fire stations and they plan to write a book about their journey with the proceeds going towards Chloé's treatment. Robin and Vuillermet, who started their United States tour in Florida, have reached Philadelphia en route to New York. Please visit www.tour-chloe.org/us/home.htm. ■



French Wine Tasting in U.S. Capitol

On April 5, the French Wine Society (FWS) and the Embassy of France organized a French wine tasting in the U.S. Capitol in honor of the Congressional Wine Caucus and the Congressional French Caucus. Fifteen U.S. importers of French wine presented their products, representing all of the major wine-producing regions of France. A wide variety of French specialty cheeses was also featured at the festive event, which was attended by about 20 Members of Congress, including Senator George Allen and Congressmen George Radanovich, Mike Thompson, Jim Oberstar, and John Boozman. French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte shared a few reflections on the French wine industry with the Members of Congress and other honored guests.

The event was intended to encourage a cross-cultural exchange of ideas and practices between producers in the wine industry. In particular, Levitte emphasized the importance of the "terroir" concept in French winemaking, the idea that products can be strongly linked to the region where they are produced. Products, such as wine or cheese, become unique to

a region thanks to generations of *savoir-faire* developed specifically therein. For example, "Champagne" can be applied only to products produced in the Champagne region in France because of its distinct attributes.



Rep. Thompson (left), Amb. Levitte (center), Rep. Radanovich (right)

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Wine Caucus, Reps. Radanovich and Thompson discussed how California and other U.S. wine producers can benefit from a better understanding of this concept to help protect and distinguish their products. Already, vintners in Napa Valley are promoting the unique characteristics of their region that make those products recognizable worldwide. Such practices are increasingly important in light of the recently-signed E.U.-U.S. Wine Agreement, which addresses European concerns about the protection of their exports. The Wine Agreement is currently pending consideration by the U.S. Congress, which must approve legislation to implement the accord.

FWS hosts many events, including *French Wine Thursdays*, wine classes and "April in Rhône," which will be held at the French Embassy on April 26. For more information, please visit www.frenchwinesociety.org.

Maine Celebrates French Cultural Heritage

As the French-speaking world was being celebrated worldwide during the "Semaine de la Francophonie," the Maine legislature participated by holding its fifth annual Franco-American Day on March 22, 2006. A variety of celebrations and conferences took place at the State House to recognize the state's French heritage and the many contributions of Franco-American citizens to Maine's culture. Congressional proceedings were held in French, and French music was featured in various parts of the building. The American National Anthem was also sung in French by 10-year-old Melanie Saucier to kick off the festivities.

The events benefited from the support from the Canadian consulate, representatives from Quebec, and the Boston-based Consul-General of France. These organizations

also discussed trade relations between Maine and France, focusing on future possibilities for increased commercial exchange.

The strong influence of French culture in this New England state dates back to the waves of Quebec and Acadian immigrants who crossed the border at the end of the 19th century. Their descendants constitute nearly a third of the population in Maine, and approximately 5 percent of the inhabitants in Maine speak French at home. However, this bi-cultural identity was originally discouraged by local authorities. French was prohibited in schools early in the 20th century and many felt pressured to anglicize their names.

Many of these laws were not repealed until the 1970s. Recently, this unique group of Americans is experiencing a resurgence of pride in their French cultural identity, particularly among young people. To learn more, please visit www.maine.gov.



Melanie Dorice Saucier, sings National Anthem

30th Anniversary of French Immersion Programs in U.S.

MONTGOMERY County, Maryland, celebrated the 30th anniversary of its French immersion programs, the first of its kind in the United States. Dr. Marie-Cécile Louvet and Mr. Gabriel Jacob launched the first immersion program 30 years ago in March. The goals of these immersion programs are an attempt to help students attain functional fluency in French, gain cultural knowledge about speakers of a second language, and develop a better understanding of their own language and culture.

In the United States, 78 programs in 48 states

around the country teach French to approximately 10,000 students. Louisiana offers eight programs, while the areas surrounding Washington, D.C. offer five programs; the second highest concentration of French immersion programs in the country. The Washington, D.C. area's French-immersion programs are all public, situated in the suburbs of Montgomery and Prince George's county in Maryland and Fairfax, Virginia. Though the concentration of French immersion programs across the rest of the country varies, efforts to increase these cultural opportunities are in progress.

NCAA CHAMPION - LIKE FATHER LIKE SON?

The son of former French tennis great and singer Yannick Noah was instrumental in helping the University of Florida secure the NCAA Basketball Championship this year. Yannick Noah, the first Frenchman in 39 years to win the French Open singles championship, seems to have passed on his athletic talents to his son. Joakim Noah, a sophomore at the University of Florida, helped the Gators advance in the NCAA tournament as a star forward. On April 3, Noah played a key role in securing the Gators' win against UCLA, earning them the national title this year. Noah was voted most outstanding player in the Final Four.

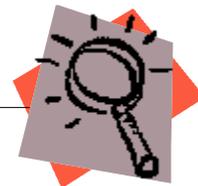
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES: BASILION OF FRANCOFONIE

Alain Mabanchou, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a novelist and a writer-in-residence at the University of Michigan. He is one of the many novelists that originates from a Francophone (French speaking) country, recruited by an American university to teach courses in Francophone literature. Today, American universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of Francophone literature and taking initiatives to integrate Francophone studies into their curriculum. Currently, the majority of universities in America who have a French language department only offer courses pertaining to French authors. A course in Francophone literature, however, allows students to explore authors who write in French yet originate in other French-speaking countries. Mabanchou believes that the growth of Francophone studies is due to American students' interest to learn about other places, such as, for example, Madagascar, Senegal or the Ivory Coast. Dr. Marc Papé, originally from the Ivory Coast, is a professor at Dickinson College who also offers several courses in this discipline, including "Francophone Sororities," an exploration of how women construct their identities in different Francophone cultures. As more universities create programs for students to complete studies abroad in Francophone countries, more students are taking an interest in learning about these non-conventional destinations before their departure. The demand for these courses from American undergraduates is consistently growing. Already, several universities in the United States, including Duke, Stanford, Harvard, New York University and the University of Michigan, have established francophone studies departments.

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Herndon Elementary students



French Spa Towns

A Brief History

THROUGHOUT history, Europe, and particularly in France, people have relied on *thalassothérapie*: the therapeutic treatment with seawater and hot springs for medicinal and leisurely reasons.

The Roman "spa" tradition of bathing in what was considered to be healing waters, was a popular treatment for a wide range of diseases in classical times. Water's perceived healing power earned spas the reputation of being sacred places, and they were often dedicated to honor various deities. Many of these spas became popular destinations for leisure and relaxation.



The King's bath, built in 12th-century

During the Dark Ages, the Church prohibited the practice of bathing in many instances. People abstained from bathing in many parts of Europe, sometimes even for years at a time. The image of public baths further deteriorated during the 16th and 17th centuries, during which many waterborne diseases became pandemic.

Thalassothérapie, which uses sea water instead of fresh water, resurfaced toward the end of 17th century in France. Two types of spas with differing applications eventually emerged: hot springs used for bathing, cold springs for what became known as "taking in waters," or drinking one's cure.

In the 19th century, doctors in France and Europe believed that for every disease, Mother Nature possessed an appropriated medicinal spring that could be discovered through the "chemical analysis of waters." Doctors throughout Europe prescribed various sea and spring treatment locations to cure different illnesses, aches and pains.

The approach was popular throughout France. Various spa baths along the Atlantic and Mediterranean became vibrant "spa towns," sought for therapeutic treatment as well as for leisure and entertainment. ■ ■

Spas Towns Today

MANY of these towns evolved into resorts during the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Many tourists and vacationers began to visit spa towns not only for their health, but also for leisure and relaxation. As spa towns continued to develop and prosper, casinos and resorts were also established in these areas.

Evian-les-Bains, is a French spa town located in southeast where the thermal therapy is prevalent. The town is home to world-famous natural mineral waters. In addition to its mineral water, the town is also known for its tourist attractions and fashionable distractions, including a casino, golf courses, exhibitions, car rallies etc. *Evian* has impressively maintained its "Belle Epoque" style throughout the centuries. The charm of Lake Geneva and the serene mountains of Chablais charms more than just patients and vacationers; the scenic beauty of the enchanting region hosted negotiators during the *Evian Accords* of 1962, at the conclusion of the Algerian war for independence, and the G8 Summit in June of 2003.

In Southwest France, *Aix-les-Bains*, which lies on the banks of *Lac Bourget*, was a popular spa town during the time of the Roman Empire. Today, *Aix-les-Bains* is the center of rheumatology treatment and fitness therapy. The town still enjoys its symbols of Roman glory, such as the *Arc de Campanus* and the ancient thermal baths, which remain the most frequently visited sites in the town ... not to mention its nearby casino.

Vittel, in the *Vosges*, is famous for its hydropathic treatment establishments

THALASSO TREATMENTS

Feeling tired and in need of a break? Want to see grand lakes, dramatic mountaintops, or relaxing sandy beaches? Try *thalassothérapie*, a French regime for body, mind and spirit that beats your ordinary spa treatment.

Drawing from a rich history of spa towns along France's coasts, thalasso uses seawater and other natural products, usually seaweed and mud, to promote good health. The term *thalassothérapie* itself, coined in 1869 by coastal French resident Doctor de La Bonnardière, combines the Greek words for "sea" and "care."

Activities available during thalasso treatments include, for example, water aerobics and various forms of psychical therapy. Treatments can be anything from mud baths to seaweed wraps, sea water steam inhalation to bubble baths, reflexology to massages, and much more. While different facilities will offer different programs, the goal everywhere is the same—making you feel great.

While the thalasso experience is luxurious and pampering, it is not only for the rich and famous. The versatility and flexibility of thalasso programs makes it appealing to a wide variety of clients. For example, in the south of France, more men are taking advantage of the relaxing benefits of seawater treatments. Additionally, more young mothers and pregnant women are taking time for themselves and visiting thalasso centers.

Loyal thalasso-goers suggest deciding on your reason for going before choosing the location and the treatments you want to receive. Do you want to ward off colds and improve your skin and respiration, soothe aching joints, lose weight, or simply relax and forget about the stress of everyday life? Your preference will influence your destination decisions.



Thalasso treatments in *Evian-les-bains*

For example, the spas in the north and west of France can be more medicinal, because the water in the Atlantic is richer in nutrients than the salty Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, thalasso in the sunny south of France can be much more appealing during the winter season in the north.

Thalasso centers dot France's three coasts. In the north of France, the town of Roscoff, Brittany, features France's first thalasso resort, *Roc Kroum*, opened in 1899. In the south, luxurious centers can be found in *Antibes*, along the *Côte d'Azur*. To the west, *Arcachon*, hometown of Doctor de la Bonnardière, offers massages, hot tubs, and more.

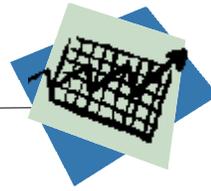
Water therapy resorts, different from thalasso in that they do not use seawater, can be found inland, near thermal springs. Along Lake Geneva, *Evian*, the town famous for its bottled water, offers water therapy in the form of hot tubs and saunas. Similar amenities are available in *Vittel*, in eastern France, the namesake of another bottled water company. In the Pyrenees, towns such as *Barèges* have thermal spas, replenished by the naturally heated waters rising from geological fault lines.

The rejuvenating and relaxing thalasso centers and thermal spas, scattered about the country, are just one more reason to visit France.

and galleries, as well as the casino in the Saint-Pierre villas. The hydropathic spa was designed by Charles Garnier, who built the *Palais Garnier* (the Paris Opera House).

Farther away in the collection of spa towns in southwest France is *Dax*, located in the Landes region. The town is on the banks of the *Adour*. It is most famous for its Gallo-Roman ruins, various archaeological crypts, arenas, and, of course, the hot springs. Tourists and patients can enjoy the hot springs and spas, as well as thalasso treatments on the banks of the *Adour*.

Finally, *Barèges* is a historic spa town that is also noteworthy. Its naturally heated water rises along a geological fault line between two different rock types - granite and schist. The waters are known to have antibiotic, anti-inflammatory and scar-reducing properties. ■ ■



Banner Year for French Companies

2005 proved to be a good year for France's top 40 companies. Net earnings for French firms surged more than 50 percent compared to 2004. Analysts predict that a healthy world economic momentum and record low interest rates in the world market were some of the reasons for French firms' impressive expansion.

Some of the gains were reported by the dairy industry giant Danone, whose profits soared 215.5 percent to reach 1.464 billion euros. Total, the French oil company, leapt 31 percent to reach 12 billion euros in net earnings. Also, EDF, the electricity utility company, saw a 102 percent profit surge. Similarly, France

Telecom and Arcelor reported 89.2 percent and 66 percent profit gains, respectively.

A similar trend among the top French firms is increased earnings abroad. French firms reported three-quarters of their profits from abroad, while domestic growth advanced only 1.4 percent.

2005 is expected to be a profitable year for shareholders. Media giant Vivendi and Arcelor reported an increase of 66 percent and 85 percent in dividends, respectively. France Telecom, on the other hand, scored the highest percentage of dividends increase, with 100 percent in dividend returns for 2005. ■■

L'Oréal Acquires Body Shop

ON March 17, the French Cosmetic company L'Oréal bought the British company Body Shop International for 1.1 billion dollars. The Body Shop was founded in 1976 as a small company based on natural, non-animal-tested products and has grown on an international scale with approximately 1,900 shops in 50 countries worldwide. L'Oréal plans to respect the Body Shop's focus on ethical hair and skin products, an ethic which L'Oréal believes to be complementary it's to values and identity. L'Oréal, the largest cosmetic company in the world, owns the brands Lancôme, Garnier, Vichy, and Maybelline lipsticks. For 21 consecutive years, the company's profits have increased at a rate of at least ten percent. February 2005 marked a particularly sharp increase, reflecting its expansion into emerging markets, as well as North America. ■■

Gaz de France Announces Plans to Build Two Pipelines

GAZ de France (GDF) announced plans to invest 1.8 billion dollars in two gas pipelines to bring gas into Europe. One of them, the Medgaz Mediterranean pipeline, will connect Algeria to Spain by 2007.

Jean-Francois Cirelli, head of GDF, announced on March 8 that they had reached an agreement with the Algerian Authorities. GDF, which is already a partner of the Medgaz consortium founded in 2001 by the Algerian company Sonatrach and the Spanish company Cepsa, will finance 12 percent of the Medgaz project, totaling about 773 million dollars. The pipeline will begin construction in July. It is expected to be completed in 2007 and is projected to be operational in 2009.

GDF's investment will make Algeria the second largest gas supplier to Europe by 2010, behind Norway and tied with Russia. The 464-mile pipeline will bring from 8 to 32 billion cubic feet of gas to Spain, which will then connect to France through the existing Auskadur pipeline. ■■

GROUND BREAKING OPERATION

French doctors attempted the world's first regeneration of skin, using stem cells extracted from bone marrow. Jean-Jacques Lataillade, head of the military laboratory for blood transfusion and research in Grenoble, presented Minister of Defense Michelle Marie Alliot with the preliminary results on March 24. The operation was performed on a young Chilean laborer who irradiated his hand while handling radioactive



material. The patient's hand had developed severe burns and necrosis of the skin. The lesions on his hand caused such extreme pain that not even morphine could alleviate it. Until his operation in France, the only solution was amputation. Instead, doctors at the Percy Army Medical Center in Clamart (*Hauts-de-Seine*) believed they could save the hand by conducting an operation that had only previously been tested on animals. The doctors removed stem cells from the patient's bone marrow in the pelvis then reproduced the cells in mass quantity before transplanting them onto the patient's hand. The stem cells were then capable of transforming into skin cells. Based on preliminary results, doctors expect the patient's hand to eventually be just as functional as it had been. This operation is a positive sign for severe burn victims and it is likely to be repeated in the future.

DANONE'S HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE

Danone announced a new initiative in collaboration with Grameen Bank, a bank that specializes in providing services to the poor in rural Bangladesh, to produce nutritional food products for millions of low-income people. The plant, a \$1 million investment, is expected to be operational in the northern city of Barga, Bangladesh, by late 2006.

Frank Riboud, Chairman of Danone, noted that the project's intention is to bring healthy, nutritious food to the largest number of people. "The mission is [to] bring daily healthy nutrition to a low income, nutritionally deprived population in Bangladesh." Although, the Danone project remains an important investment for the company, the world's biggest producer of fresh dairy products does not intend to make the project a for-profit venture. Danone also expects to cultivate several hundred livestock and husbandry distribution jobs by its projected date of operation: late 2006.

NEW JOINT FRANCO-AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER

The Georgia Institute of Technology, based in Atlanta and represented in Europe by Georgia Tech Lorraine (GTL) in Metz (northeast), recently announced, in coordination with the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), the creation of a French-American research unit. The new research center to be built in Metz will comprise several laboratories, bringing together researchers, Ph.D.'s and technicians from CNRS and the Georgia Institute of Technology. The new research center aims to develop new security techniques for telecommunication networks by using optical fibers as well as to develop new innovative materials in optics and electronics. The directors of the center believe that the new partnership will encourage innovations in the domain of telecommunications and nanotechnology.

CNRS has already established several bilateral research units with universities abroad, though this is the first research unit of its kind to be established in France. The new center is an extension of a former photonics research unit established in 1998 between GTL and CNRS that focused on network security via fiber optics. The Georgia Institute of Technology allocates half of their annual budget of 850 million dollars to research, making it the second largest university in the United States supported by the private sector to conduct research in the sciences and technologies.

"CLEAN" POLITICS

The city of Paris is "cleaning up" its politics in the sense that the city has recently launched a campaign to further maintain the cleanliness of the city. Paris recently launched a new campaign aimed at better cleaning the city, called



Arc de Triomphe, Paris

"Pas de ça chez vous? Paris c'est chez vous." The campaign includes city-wide initiatives that have been established to assist residents in removing large and bulky trash items. Even though it is often difficult to throw away certain objects, residents can be fined up to 183 euros for dumping large trash items in the streets. Thanks to a central dispatch, Paris residents can now call a toll-free number or visit the city's website to request a trash pickup for bulky trash material. According to an annual survey by the city, in 2005, 62 percent of the 4,000 residents interviewed considered Paris to be a clean city.

LES BIJOUX DES STARS

The Musée Carnavalet, in Paris, is displaying a collection of over 200 pieces from luxurious American jewelers such as



Broche Ballerine, Van Cleef

© Zane White

Tiffany and Van Cleef & Arpels. Stars such as Grace Kelly and Jackie Kennedy have worn the featured masterpieces. The exhibit will run until May 7.

NEW SERVICE CREATED

The French Ministry of Employment, Social Cohesion and Housing launched its television and internet campaign for the new "Service à la Personne" (services for people) program on March 7, which seeks to help people in diverse ways. The law passed in October 2005 provides assistance to the elderly and handicapped, as well as assistance with babysitting, tutoring, housework and administrative or technological assistance.



Expedition Across Siberia for Environment

ON March 19, French Explorer Nicolas Vanier arrived in Moscow with his Franco-Russian team and his ten sled dogs after a 5,000 mile expedition across Siberia to raise environmental awareness. Vanier and his team sleighed into the Red Square on a specially prepared snow trail where a Russian reception greeted him with shouts of "bravo!" and "Vive la France!" The French Ambassador also greeted him in Russia conveying a message of thanks on behalf of President Jacques Chirac, who plans to receive Vanier upon his return to France. The expedition



Vanier arrives in Moscow

began in Irkutsk on the shores of Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia, and then crossed



Vanier in training

some of the most treacherous parts of Russian territory, through mountain ranges, tundra, and the thick forest called the Taiga. They traveled about 50-60 miles a day with only a short three-day pause in Tomsk. A camera crew that accompanied the expedition shot a movie that will be shown in 35,000 French schools as part of an ecology awareness campaign. For more information please visit: www.nicolasvanier.com.

G6 Collaborates on European Initiatives

ON March 22, interior ministers of France, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Poland met in Heiligendamm, Germany, to discuss European initiatives to combat illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking, organized crime as well as to coordinate efforts to enhance the integration of immigrants into the E.U. Known as the G6, the meeting united the interior ministers from six of the most populated countries in Europe. French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, in conjunction

with his German counterpart, Wolfgang Schauble proposed a project to create a European compulsory integration exam for new immigrants. The six ministers agreed to create a commission of experts to examine an eventual "contract of integration" for new immigrants. A contract of integration would require new immigrants to learn the official language of their adopted country in addition to accepting social norms. A breach of the contract could potentially result in expulsion.

France Celebrates World Storytelling Day

FRANCE celebrated an unusual occasion, titled "France for World Storytelling Day" on March 20. The aim of the celebration was to encourage as many people as possible to entertain themselves in the tradition of telling and listening to stories. Caroline Catelli, a spokeswoman in France for World Storytelling Day, told reporters that, "In this era of Playstations and Gameboys, it is important to give space to storytelling."

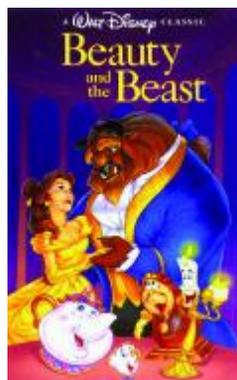
The tradition of story telling comes from a long history of fascinating fables that have surfaced since the Middle Ages in France. French fables that captivated children as well as adults continue to be enchanting experiences for children around the globe. Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Blue Beard* are stories that have been rewritten throughout the past century. They are published in many languages across the globe. Stories such as *The Little Prince* and *Beauty and the Beast* are two examples that started out as fables and eventually evolved into Oscar-, and Golden Globe-nominated works in recent times.

The idea of France for World Storytelling is to

recapture the essence and magical experience of telling fables to children and adults in the outdoors and allowing them to form the enchanting story through their imagination and interaction with the storyteller.

A study in 2000 found that there were 300 professional storytellers in France, and some 4,000 amateurs. There were more than 25,000 storytelling events in the past year, with some two million spectators. The report also indicated that there are courses in storytelling that are conducted in France for over 3,500 people.

Alain Houzet, a professional storyteller says that the important thing is to get the emotions across, to draw in the audience and intrigue them. He believes that storytelling really depends on the storyteller's ability to alter the tale, making way for new stories to be created in the listeners' imagination and to create new generation of storytellers, keeping the craft of storytelling alive.





60th Anniversary of *Le Petit Prince*

ANTOINE de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, the best-selling French book in the world, is celebrating its 60th anniversary. It was published by Gallimard in April 1946.

Le Petit Prince includes watercolors by Saint-Exupéry himself, and has sold more than 80 million copies across the world, 11 million in France alone. *Le Petit Prince* was first published in the United States in 1943. The story has been translated into 160 languages and dialects, including most recently Urdu, the official language of Pakistan, and Indonesian.

The themes of fraternity and imagination dominate *Le Petit Prince*, which chronicles a pilot's plane crash in the desert and the stories recounted to him there by a mysterious young prince. The prince tells the pilot about his beloved but vain rose, a self-impor-



Limited edition

tant king, an illogical businessman, and more.

Although *Le Petit Prince* is popular with young audiences, the book is not just for children. In fact, much of its message seems directed at adults who get caught up in themselves and their work. The text itself points out that "all grown-ups were once children."

Saint-Exupéry, himself a pilot and a pioneer of air mail, disappeared during a flight in 1944. Saint-Exupéry never lived to see the French edition in 1946 or enjoy his worldwide fame. His other previous works include *Night Flight* and *Southern Mail*.

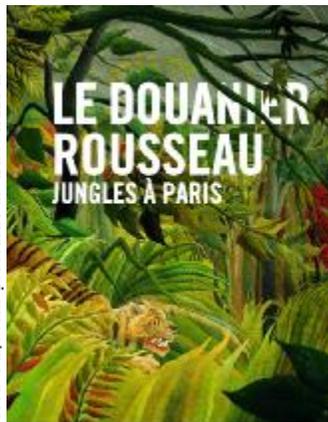
Various commemorative materials celebrating this book's impact on generations of readers are now available. For example, the limited edition above, is a vibrant collection filled with anecdotes (did you know that this was James Dean's favorite book?), unedited designs, testimonials and much more. For more information, visit www.lepetitprince.com.

Henri Rousseau Exhibit at Grand Palais

PAINTINGS by Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) will fill the Grand Palais Museum in Paris until May 1. The 50 paintings on exhibit are organized with exotic jungle images mirroring portraits of familiar city settings.

The exhibition's strategic juxtaposition of the jungle scenes and city landscapes helps explain why an urban artist would choose to paint jungle landscapes. The jungle portraits seem strangely familiar and safe while the city scenes, ironically, evoke a wild, jungle-like feeling. For example, *Jardin de Luxembourg* (1909), on display in the exhibition, infuses a city park scene with menace, showing peoples' faces masked by hats and a tall dark statue looming in the center. By contrast, the famous jungle scene, *Le Rêve* (1910) exudes a primitive harmony with a shy-looking lion staring out directly at the viewer.

At a time in history when modern city life was still



Tiger in a Tropical Storm (Surprised!), 1891

evolving, the anonymity and alienation of city life is forcefully conveyed in Rousseau's paintings. In fact, all of Rousseau's jungle scenes were inspired by and painted exclusively in the city of Paris, drawing from the unsettling qualities of urban anonymity as well as the different gardens and zoos of the city. His extremely vivid imagination and exoticism that was often misunderstood by his contemporaries is what made him a major forerunner to the 20th-century surrealist movement, and endeared him to Picasso, Kandinsky, and Apollinaire.

The exhibition is organized by the French Réunion des Musées Nationaux, the British Modern Tate Museum and Washington's National Gallery of Art, where it will be shown from July 6 to October 15.

European Support to French Film Industry

AFTER two years of careful examination and extensive negotiation, the European Commission approved the support of the French film and audiovisual industry on March 22. Help will be given to the pre-production, production, distribution, and editing sectors of the film industry as well as to movie theaters and to the photography industry. This assistance from Europe comes to about 600 million dollars per year, which accounts for nearly half of the total help given to European countries for their film industries.

The commission stated that it agreed on this assistance program because it will encourage cultural development without negatively affecting other member states. The assistance will last through 2011 and was ratified with the condition that France accept the commission's possible modifica-

tions that could take place in 2007.

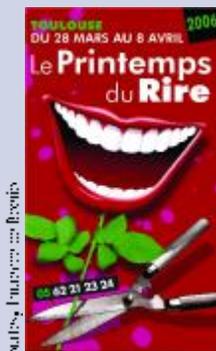
The French film industry is benefiting from such a large percentage of the European Union's help because of its national and international success. Nationally, 2005 marked a record year for movie production, with 240 movies, an 18 percent increase from 2004. By the end of 2005, cinema attendance in France had increased by 1.3 percent since 2003 in contrast to the average of six percent drop in the E.U.



Movie theatre in Paris

The success of the French film industry extended internationally with *The March of the Penguins*, which had higher earnings abroad than it did in France, and the nomination of *Joyeux Noël* for best foreign film at the American Oscars.

CAN'T KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE?



Toulouse, in southwestern France, hosted the 11th annual *Festival Printemps du rire*, the Spring Comedy Festival, from March 28 to April 8. It featured 45 acts and 125 shows, and

comedians Danny Boon and Franck Dubosc were the stars of the show. Boon, who acted in the Academy Award-nominated film *Joyeux Noël*, opened the festival with a routine titled "Waika." On the evening of April 7, several comedians performed at the three-and-a-half-hour-long program *La Nuit du Printemps*. Finally, Dubosc, who has been performing a show titled "Romantique" across France, closed the festival on April 8. Visit: www.printempsdurire.com.

FRENCH IN ROMANIA

Romanian president Traian Basescu announced on March 21 that Bucharest, the nation's capital, will soon be home to a francophone and European university as well as a new, larger French high school. Basescu explained, "I look forward to the creation of a francophone university in Bucharest so as to diffuse that culture in the Balkans and the Black Sea region." Bucharest's current French high school, Lycée Anna de Noailles, is at full capacity. In September, Bucharest will host the Summit of the International Organization of Francophone Countries (OIF), a first for Eastern Europe.

ORIGINAL EDITION HUGO TEXT FOUND

In Thibodaux, a town in southeastern Louisiana, a bookseller's trash has become a bicyclist's treasure. On March 13, Margaret Cranwell was riding past a bookstore in nearby Covington, when she spotted a pile of old books in the garbage. She picked up one about music and says she later felt compelled to look for more. Back at the shop, Cranwell discovered a 17-volume original edition, third printing of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. She gave the books to the shop owner, Jerry Laiche, who has sent photos to auction houses Swann Galleries in New York and Christie's in London. A literature specialist at Swann remarked that she is waiting to receive the books before arranging a sale that would take place in May. Cranwell, hopes to use profits from the sale to open a convent in Thibodaux.

