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The Times

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FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2004

New era in Greenwood

Residents hope new mayor, council will bring harmony, growth to town.

By Melody Brumble
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A car hauler laden with red, white, blue and yellow pickups fresh from the General Motors assembly line rolls west on U.S. Highway 80 past the window of the Greenwood Senior Center, throwing reflections across

the dozen elderly residents chatting over lunch.

The center and a Shreve Memorial branch library, housed in a former convenience store owned by the town and renovated with town funds, symbolize Greenwood citizens' mixed feelings about how town business has been conducted the past four years. They are feelings that came out in force when the town elected a new leader Tuesday replacing embattled Mayor Jerry Melot with retired educator and current Alderman

Ernerst Lampkins.

The renovation project, which cost more than \$200,000, gave senior citizens more space but is among issues under investigation by the Louisiana legislative auditor's office. Grover Austin, acting legislative auditor, expects the audit to be finished in a month, meaning the current board of aldermen will handle the issue.

Helen Aucoin, who volunteers at the center, says it's

■ See NEW 2A



Jessica Leigh/The Times

Volunteers Linda Smallwood (left) and Jackie Kersee Key (center) say they are passionate about their love for the Greenwood Senior Center. It is located inside Shreve Memorial Library and was created by the Caddo Council on Aging in Greenwood.

House OKs business tax renewal

Legislation now goes to state Senate.

By Adam Nossiter
The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE — Gov. Kathleen Blanco won a partial victory Thursday in a major early test for her administration when the state House narrowly approved some taxes on business, though not for as long as the governor had hoped.

Blanco had wanted to make the taxes permanent, saying the move was necessary to inject some stability into the state's finances. She decried the fact that the taxes, on the utility bills of businesses, were renewed every two years yet still deemed "temporary."

But her plan ran into trouble in the House, where many members said they were unwilling to deal a blow to business in a troubled economic climate, and others suggested they were leery of

the political risk of imposing a permanent tax. Attempts to handle the bill Wednesday were quickly scuttled to give leaders more time to negotiate for the necessary votes.

Thursday, Blanco's legislative leaders offered up a five-year renewal of the business utility tax instead, which will put the next vote off until after the next legislative and gubernatorial elections. The compromise barely passed with the required two-thirds vote, 70-33.

The legislation now goes to the state Senate, and it is unclear whether the governor will attempt to revert back to her original plan in that chamber.

Blanco, who had worked into Wednesday evening in an attempt to bring legislators around, hailed the five-year compromise as a significant victory. She insisted that her original, permanent plan had been "very close" to passage

■ See SESSION 3A

Burn victim donates \$65,000

Harley fan rides to assist families of patients treated at local LSU center.

By John Andrew Prime
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For three months after a pipeline explosion near Waskom, Texas, Charles "Boo" Chaler stared at the ceiling in the LSU Hospital burn center intensive care unit wondering what would become of the rest of his life.

Thursday, as he and his wife, Patsy, delivered a gift of \$65,000 to the people who saved his life, he gave tangible proof that he's found his cause. Their money to the Percy R. Johnson Burn Foundation will help operate the Chalor-Rods House, a home on Claiborne Avenue where the families of burn victims undergoing treatment can stay for free. It also will help put on an annual burn camp for children coordinated by the foundation.

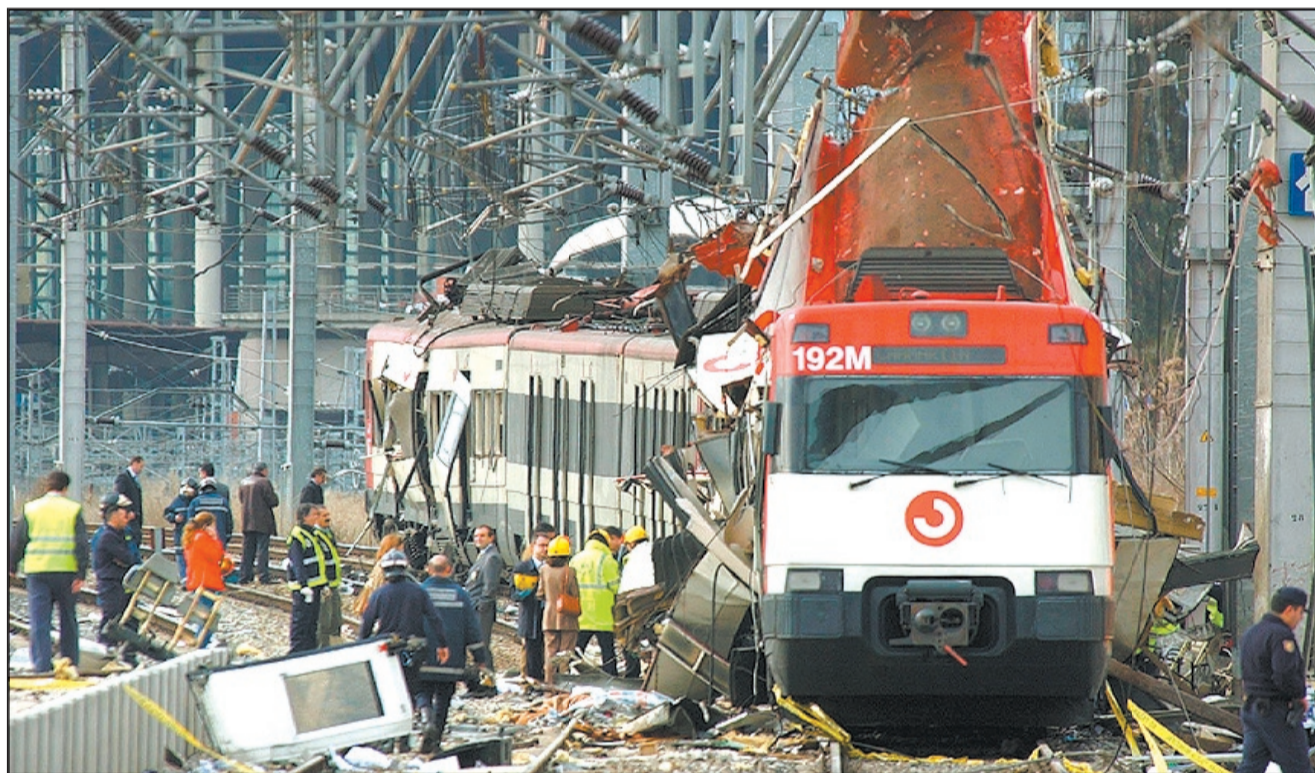
For Chaler, a Marshall, Texas, pipeline worker with a passion for riding Harley-Davidson motorcycles, dedication to the cause was painfully born of the May 27, 1998, accident that left him burned over 93 percent of his body. Family and friends who prayed for him wondered if he would live, let alone ever ride his beloved Harley again.

"I surprise them every day," Chaler, 52, said Thursday, just a few feet from his gold-colored Harley-Davidson 2003 Screaming Eagle 100th Edition Road King. "They thought

■ See DONATION 2A

Rush-hour attacks on trains may have al-Qaida links

Spain bombings kill at least 192



Emergency response personnel work around the destroyed intercity train at Atocha train station in Madrid after a number of blasts rocked railway stations in the city on Thursday, just three days before Spain's general elections.

The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — A series of 10 bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession Thursday, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing at least 192 people and wounding 1,200. Spain blamed Basque separatists but a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida for the worst terrorist attack in Spanish history.

Panicked commuters trampled on each other, abandoning their bags and shoes, after two of the bombs went off in one train in the Atocha station in the heart of Madrid. Train cars were turned into twisted wrecks and platforms were strewn with corpses. Cell phones rang unanswered on the bodies of the dead as frantic relatives tried to call them.

"March 11, 2004, now holds its place in the history of infamy," Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said.

The bombing came three days ahead of Spain's general election on Sunday. A major campaign issue was



Two people injured by an explosion in a train wait for aid. At least 192 people were killed Thursday.

how to deal with ETA, the Basque militant group.

Campaigning for the election was called off and three days of mourning were declared.

"An act of barbaric terrorism has engulfed Spain with profound pain, repulsion and anger," King Juan

Carlos said.

At one station, "there was one carriage totally blown apart. People were scattered all over the platforms. I saw legs and arms. I won't forget this ever. I've seen horror," said Enrique Sanchez, an ambulance worker.

Who carried out the

attack was a mystery. The government pointed to Basque separatist group ETA although a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida.

An Arabic newspaper said it had received a claim of responsibility issued in the name of al-Qaida.

"This is part of settling old accounts with Spain, the crusader, and America's ally in its war against Islam," the claim said.

Spain backed the war on Iraq despite domestic opposition. Spain's government is studying the al-Qaida claim but still believes ETA is more likely responsible, an official in Aznar's office said.

The United States, Britain and Russia said the attacks demonstrated the need for toughened resolve against terrorists.

President Bush called Aznar and Juan Carlos, saying he expressed "our country's deepest sympathies toward those who lost their life."

"I told them we weep with the families. We stand strong with the people of Spain," he said.

Government wants to halt andro sales

Health officials say steroid-like supplement harmful.

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government ordered an end to sales of the steroid-like supplement andro, made famous by baseball's Mark McGwire, in the latest crack-down on over-the-counter pills that claim to help people get in better shape.

Thursday's move against andro came even as the government faced a legal challenge to its pending ban on sales of another supplement, ephedra.

Andro, short for androstenedione, is a steroid precursor — the body converts it into testosterone, and, to some extent, estrogen.

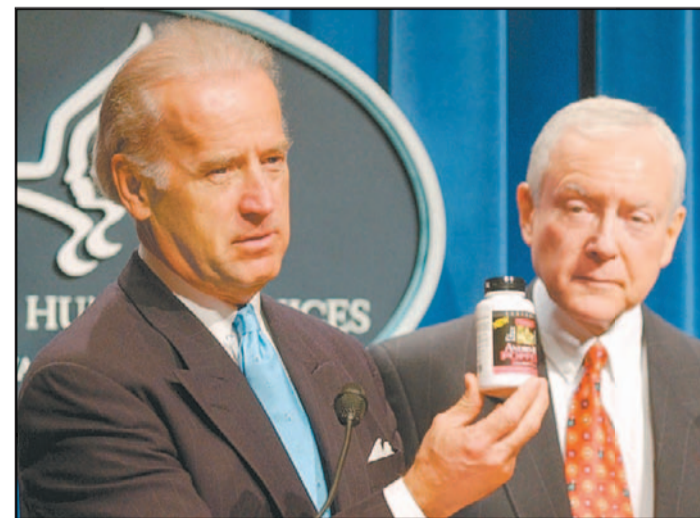
Thus it poses the same health risks as directly using an anabolic steroid, the Food and Drug Administration said Thursday in warning 23 manufacturers to cease sales or face

federal seizure of their products and other penalties.

Among the risks FDA cited are heart and liver damage, and some gender-specific problems: testicular atrophy, impotence and breast enlargement for males, and facial hair, menstrual problems and increased risk of breast and uterine cancer for females. Children can undergo early puberty and stunting of bone growth.

"These are irreversible, irreversible health consequences," FDA Commissioner Mark McClellan said.

Athletic use of performance-enhancing drugs is drawing harsh political scrutiny, even from President Bush, and legislation pending in Congress would ban over-the-counter sales of andro, athletes' trendy new steroid THG, and more than two dozen other steroid-like substances. The Bush administration endorsed that legislation Thursday, and already had put sellers on notice that THG was an illegal steroid.



Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del. (left) holds up a bottle of Andro Fuel, a type of steroid precursor, during a news conference at the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington on Thursday with Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah.

Get involved

Boo Chaler's burn Web site: www.boobenefit.org.
Percy R. Johnson Burn Foundation, includes information on its annual burn camp for children: www.laburncamp.org.
Percy R. Johnson Burn Foundation, through LSU Health Sciences Center: (318) 675-6136.
Boo and Patsy Chaler: (903) 935-6005.
Red River Street Rods: (318) 949-9117.

CORRECTION

✓ Wednesday's Pick 3 winning numbers for the Louisiana Lottery were 2-5-4. The numbers were incorrect in Thursday editions of The Times.

NATION

Calif. Supreme Court orders halt to same-sex weddings

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Shooting raises more worries over Iraqi guerrillas

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Massachusetts debate continues.