

dential clash with New Hampshire; "Tax cuts, too help me God," says national front-runner George W. Bush. 4A.

**NEW RADIO STATIONS:** Federal Communications Commission clears way for low-power radio stations, giving small communities a bigger voice. 1B.

**TODAY'S DEBATE:** Safety and home offices. In USA TODAY's opinion, "Do dirty dishes, dust bunnies violate OSHA rules?" 14A.

► "Such an important issue, affecting millions of workers, demands that we work together to forge a new national consensus," Labor Secretary Alexis Herman says. 14A.

**MONEY:** Lucent says first-quarter earnings will be weaker than expected; stock, others in tech sector tumble. 1B.  
► Demand for chips might put pinch on PC makers. 1B.  
► Options trading is reaching the masses. 1B.  
► Filing taxes with PC is getting easier and cheaper. 3B.

**SPORTS:** Cleveland cans Golden State 90-75. NBA. 10C.  
► Pete Rose wants another chance. Even if he gets it, he won't get in Hall of Fame on first ballot, survey shows. 3C.

**LIFE:** Traveling into the future begins now; rooms with a view of the final frontier. 1D.  
► Toyota Avalon is big but not beautiful. Test Drive. 8D.  
► New restaurants promising dining thrills across USA. 9D.  
► Spotlight is still bright on playwright Arthur Miller. 1E.  
► Lara Croft vs. Indiana Jones: a video game duel. 4E.

Written by John O. Buckley

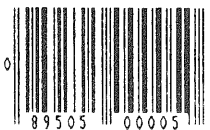
## Coming Monday



### Sailor man

Dennis Conner, at the helm, left: well-known, dished, champion sailor is always making waves. He's at it again. Maybe not winning friends, but winning his way toward America's Cup.

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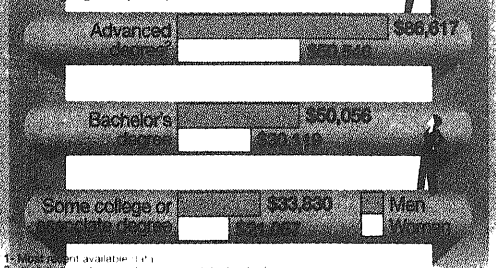
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## USA SNAPSHOTS®

A look at statistics that shape the nation

### College still helps men more

Though the average 1998<sup>1</sup> earnings of people 18 or older got higher with more education, men's earnings greatly outpaced women's.



1. Most recent available data.  
2. Includes masters, doctoral and doctorate degrees.  
Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, March 1998

By James Abourezk, Staff Writer, Minneapolis Star Tribune



**Holiday misery:** Vernita Bostic, 57, is examined by Monique van Berkum at Chicago's Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. "I just want to get it over with," Bostic said.

'I thought it was just a cold.' So goes the lament of the army of the ailing.

By Anita Manning  
USA TODAY

They struggle into emergency rooms looking like wet cats: bedraggled, shivering, hacking.

Flu season 2000 is hitting the USA with a ferocity that has filled doctors' offices, overwhelmed hospital emergency rooms and inundated drug stores.

### COVER STORY

"It came on as an intense explosion," says Mark Smith, head of the Washington (D.C.) Hospital Center's emergency department, where patient after patient was being wheeled in Thursday, many of them very ill.

"People are sicker this year than last year. We've seen more patients, and the patients are sicker than in previous years. My impression is this is a more severe strain."

On Sunday, his emergency room had its busiest day ever with 205 patients.

The scope of the epidemic nationwide is difficult to gauge. The disease counters at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta have numbers only through Dec. 18 and are expected to release new numbers today.

But anecdotally, the scene is much the same across the country.

"For the last three weeks we've been overwhelmed," says Wally Ghurabi, director of the emergency room at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. "Whole families have been coming in together."

Doctors have seen fevers of 105, Ghurabi says. He has put in hours of overtime. Hospital admissions, most of them caused by complications of the flu, and traffic in the emergency room are up 20% to 30%, he says, primarily because of the flu. Most affected are older people who "can't handle the fever as well."

For the elderly or those with chronic illnesses, the flu can be dangerous. It can wear down the immune system and lead to bacterial illnesses such as pneumonia or bronchitis. But even younger people say this year's flu is especially bad.

"The pains were awful, like somebody took your body and started to twist it," says Nancy Acampora of Queens, N.Y., who became ill on Christmas Day. "I felt like some-

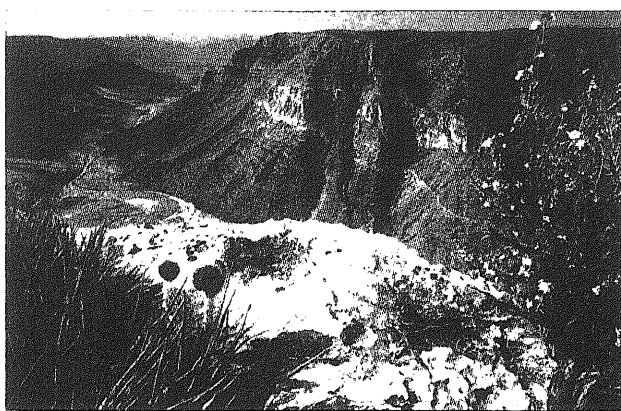
Please see COVER STORY next page ►

## Arizona land will be preserved

President Clinton is expected to designate 1 million acres of cliffs and chasms near the Grand Canyon in Arizona as a new national monument next week.

The Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument will help protect the canyon's watershed.

There is opposition: Some lawmakers say tourists will despoil the land, and ranchers fear that grazing will be prohibited. 2A



## tech

By Susan L. USA TODAY

WASHINGTON Clinton will announce his first steps to combat the digital divide, including a plan to spend \$90 million on government technology. Terms less than...

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