

Mass transit not catching on

Most states are still spending highway money on roads, despite having billions for mass transit systems. They sniff at the federal government's lofty goals. 4A.

China moss hunters killing the land

Western China's "get-rich" moss offers harvesters a chance at a better life. But not without a cost. The land is being turned into desert. 11A.

Today's debate: U.S. aid to Africa

In USA TODAY's opinion, "The United States surely can't expect to solve every woe. But under Washington's watchful eye, it has been doing less of what is needed, not more." 14A.

► "We have worked with our African partners to confront Africa's challenges," Samuel Berger says. 14A.

Money: Columbia settling Medicare flap

Hospital operator Columbia/HCA tentatively agrees to pay at least an unprecedented \$745 million to settle civil allegations that it defrauded Medicare. 1B.

► Financial differences between DreamWorks and Blockbuster are keeping copies of *American Beauty* off some of the video chain's shelves. 1B.

► Heavy losses are mounting, yet some tech stock investors won't let go. Psychology is involved. 3B.

Sports: Flyers on winning course

The Philadelphia team takes a 2-1 series lead on the New Jersey Devils with big 4-2 win. They face off again Saturday night. NHL. 1,14C.

► A Virginia teen is seconds from being the first high school miler in 33 years to break 4 minutes. 3C.

Life: Travel isn't about comfort

Paul Theroux likes taking the road less traveled. And if fear enters the picture, so be it. An interview with the adventuresome writer. 5D.

► Mercedes Benz SLK 320 ups the ante in the German two-seater sports car battle. Test Drive, 9D.

► Disney's ★★ *Dinosaur* a bit of a bore. Review, 9E. A first look at Julia Roberts and Brad Pitt on the scene of their upcoming movie *The Mexican*. 2E.

By John O. Buckley

Holiday week specials

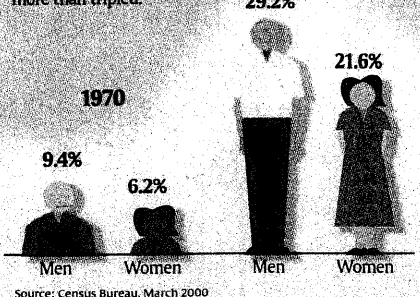


- Wednesday: All about *M12*, the *Mission: Impossible* sequel with Tom Cruise, and a review.
- Thursday: The best in summer books.
- Friday: Fifty foods that sum up every state, and a double Indy 500 bonus section.

USA TODAY Snapshots®

30-something and single on the rise

Between 1970 and 1998, the proportion of people age 30 to 34 who had never married more than tripled.



Source: Census Bureau, March 2000

By Hilary Wasson and Sam Ward, USA TODAY

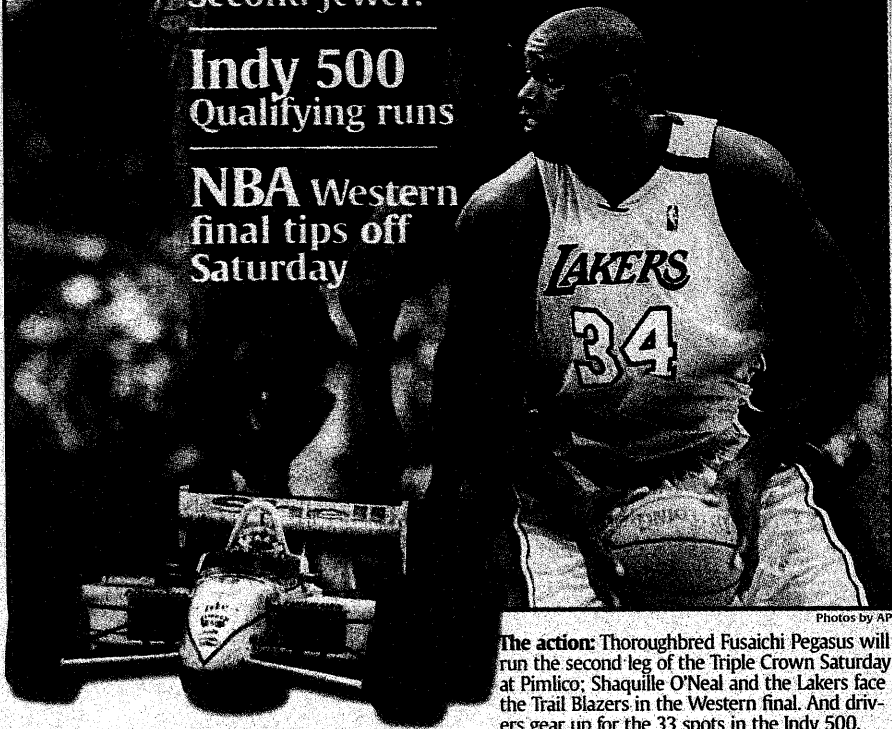


Crossword 11D
Editorial/Opinion 14-15A
Lotteries 11D
Marketplace Today 10-11D
State-by-state 13A
Stocks 4-7, 9-11B

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Indy 500 Qualifying runs

NBA Western final tips off Saturday



Photos by AP

The action: Thoroughbred Fusaichi Pegasus will run the second leg of the Triple Crown Saturday at Pimlico; Shaquille O'Neal and the Lakers face the Trail Blazers in the Western final. And drivers gear up for the 33 spots in the Indy 500.

Clinton takes to airwaves for

House votes next week on norm

By Bill Nichols
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — President Clinton will use a televised address to the nation Sunday night to urge passage of the U.S.-China trade bill that faces a critical vote in the House of Representatives next week.

Supporters were confident Thursday that Congress would approve the legislation. It would permanently grant China normal trade relations with the United States in exchange for new access to China's mar-

kets for U.S. concerns.

Clinton's five-minute address is set for 7 p.m. ET. As of Thursday evening, Fox, CNN and NBC planned to air the address. ABC and CBS declined.

Clinton has been making an all-out push for the bill, which could enhance his foreign policy legacy and chart the course of U.S.-China relations.

He appeared Thursday at the White House with Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Green-

span, who urged passage.

Greenspan said U.S. companies would experience economic gains as a result of new access to Chinese markets. He also said the effects of the bill "will work to strengthen the rule of law within China and to firm its commitment to economic reform."

Opponents of the legislation want to keep an annual vote on granting China normal trade status. They say that allows

Washington to improve its rights, labor and environmental al-

In other dev-
► White Ho-
lobbyists said
Democrats loc-
the bill; 25 to

Supporters: crats can supp-
House, Repub-
provide the vo-
to a 218-vote

Foreign firms threaten as execs and families

By Elliot Blair Smith
USA TODAY

MEXICO CITY — Bridgestone-Firestone executive Tad Yoshimura brought his two young children to work at the Japanese tiremaker's factory near Cuernavaca, an hour south of capital, on Sunday morning, April 9. He attended to company business.

What happened next fulfills a foreign executive's deepest fear of Mexico and many parents' darkest nightmare. Law enforcement officials say a handful of Bridgestone-Firestone security guards conspired with two local police officers to snatch one of the children and extort ransom in excess of \$1 million.

Once payment was made, the child was turned safely. But the abduction caps a series of brazen human heists that have plagued wealthy Mexicans and foreign executives since December 1994, when the country's currency, and economy, collapsed.

Now some foreign executives warn Mexican government that they won't stop



Illustration by Jim Sargent, USA TODAY

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