

The Modesto Bee

THE NATION

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Timber woes bring Oregon library closures

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEDFORD, Ore. — Jackson County was closing its 15 libraries Friday because the accustomed federal timber payments used to sustain them are in doubt, and in many towns the closures were marked with bitter-sweet observances.

In Eagle Point, Carole Mercer carefully removed embroidered jeans and tennis shoes Thursday from the local branch where they had been on display in honor of her daughter.

Mercer donated \$100,000 to help build the two-year-old branch. Her 20-year-old daughter, Sarah Ann, died in 1997. Mercer also removed the young woman's portrait.

"I cannot bear to leave my daughter's memory in a closed library," said Mercer.

County commissioners decided on the closures after Congress failed to renew the timber payments program that paid the county \$23 million a year. Other agencies will see cutbacks, and several counties with federal timber land are cutting jobs and services.

As Mercer packed up the memorial, two dozen youngsters filed through the door to attend Storytime, the last before closure.

Last year, 900 kids in the town of about 5,500 signed up for the summer program.

"It's sad that this is being done," said Rose Malone, who brought her 5-year-old grandson, Jarrett.

But she said she is reluctant to vote for a

three-year levy on May 15 that would give \$8.3 million annually to reopen the libraries.

Mercer said some residents say libraries are unnecessary in the Internet age, but as she spoke, children and adults were using computers funded by grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Teresa Montgomery, interim director of Southern Oregon University's Hannon library in Ashland, said it would remain open to the public, but to check out books people would have to buy a "Friends of the Library" card, at \$35 for a year's privileges.

Passage of the May 15 levy requires a "double majority," in which at least half of the registered voters must turn out and half or more of those must approve it.

Heist suspect when found: 'Just shoot me'

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRANCHBURG, N.J. — When a third suspect was caught Friday in a bank robbery investigation that led to the fatal shooting of an FBI agent, he had a request for officers: "Just shoot me."

Francisco Herrera-Genao, 22, was half-naked, and caked with mud and twigs after a night in the woods. He was arrested after trying to carjack a woman, authorities said.

Herrera-Genao eluded a 300-officer manhunt for almost a day after gunfire erupted outside a bank that authorities suspected was about to be robbed in Readington, N.J.

The shooting began when FBI agents confronted three men. Agent Barry Lee Bush, 52, was killed in the gunfire, and the FBI said he may have been hit by shots from another agent.

Two other suspects were arrested shortly after the shooting.

Herrera-Genao was found Friday, a few miles from the bank.

Wilfredo Berrios, 28, and Michael Cruz, 21, both of New Brunswick, N.J., will be charged with attempted armed robbery, federal prosecutors said. Herrera-Genao was expected to face similar charges.

Authorities said Herrera-Genao was caught Friday after approaching the woman in the car as she prepared to leave home.

"He started hitting on my window, trying to get in my car," Beverly Hardon said. She sped off and then called police.

Police dogs quickly flushed Herrera-Genao out of the woods, authorities said.

"Just shoot me. Just kill me," the shoeless, shirtless suspect told the state trooper who approached him, according to State Police Superintendent Rick Fuentes.

An FBI task force had been tracking Herrera-Genao and the other two men for weeks following a string of bank heists.

98 percent of illegal border-crossers are never prosecuted, report finds

By ALICIA A. CALDWELL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL PASO, Texas — For all the tough talk out of Washington on immigration, illegal immigrants caught along the Mexican border have almost no reason to fear they will be prosecuted.

Ninety-eight percent of those arrested from Oct. 1, 2000, to Sept. 30, 2005, were not prosecuted for illegally entering the country, according to an Associated Press analysis of federal data.

Those 5.3 million immigrants were escorted back across the Rio Grande and turned loose. Many presumably tried to slip into the United States again.

The number of immigrants prosecuted annually tripled during that five-year period, to 30,848 in fiscal year 2005, the most recent figures available. But that represented less than 3 percent of the 1.17 million people arrested that year. The prosecution rate was just under 1 percent in 2001.

Bigger fish to fry?

The likelihood of an illegal immigrant being prosecuted is "to me, practically zero," said Kathleen Walker, president-elect of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Federal prosecutors along the border have come under pressure from politicians and from top officials in the Justice Department to pursue more cases against illegal immigrants.

But few politicians are seriously suggesting the government prosecute everyone caught slipping across the border. With about 1 million immigrants stopped each year, that would overwhelm the nation's prisons, break the Justice Department's budget and paralyze the courts, immigration experts say.

The Justice Department says it has higher priorities and too few resources to go after every ordinary illegal immigrant.

Instead, the department says, it pursues selective strategies, such as going after immigrant smugglers and immigrants with criminal records.

T.J. Bonner, the union chief for Border Patrol agents, said

that the most effective solution would be to dry up job opportunities in the United States by cracking down on employers who hire illegal immigrants.

"The employers are the ones breaking the law," he said, suggesting the creation of an "idiot-proof" system to check the immigration status of workers and the prosecution of any employ-

ers who knowingly hire people in this country illegally.

Under federal law, illegally entering the country is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and up to six months in prison for a first offense.

The federal figures on arrests and prosecutions were collected by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University in New York.

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