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BAY AREA

AND CALIFORNIA

SECTION

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Feds' BALCO motto: Garbage in, garbage out

The BALCO steroid case captured worldwide headlines, but here's a little Keystone Kops sideshow that might have been lost in the media landslide.

We call it the great garbage caper.

As you may have read, the feds got their first break in the case by secretly going through the Burlingame steroid manufacturer's garbage.

But what you may not have heard is that once the agents picked through BALCO's finan-



Matier & Ross

cial records, they repacked the garbage and dumped it again — in someone else's garbage.

"The thing that was so funny about it was that guy whose can they dumped it in would call BALCO up and complain about their garbage being in his trash bin," said attorney and legal analyst Paula Canny, who is also a longtime friend of BALCO owner Victor Conte.

"Victor would apologize, tell the man he had no idea how it got there, and then would go over and pick it back up," Canny said. "They took one look at what was missing and could immediately tell what

was going on."

In fact, on Aug. 13, 2003, BALCO even filed a report with the Burlingame Police Department complaining about the mysterious theft and reappearance of its trash at the Pearse office building on Murchison Drive — about a mile and a half from BALCO.

According to the report, "Both parties felt that this situation was suspicious and wanted it documented."

And it was — in more ways than they ever imagined.

Gripping tale: With all the flirtation between Sacramento and the movie business, it was just a matter of time before we'd have a name-dropping contract dispute.

And we do — a beef between the state Department of Justice and a firm called Get a Grip productions, which signed a contract with the agency to make a "Drugs and Youth" mentoring video.

At issue: allegations of meddling and budget-busting demands by the state have left pro-

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SAN MATEO

Of attention

g Pamela Vitale made dramatic could be a red flag, experts say.

about the case, mental health professionals and educators are urging adults to regularly check in with kids, ask what's up — and listen carefully to the answers.

For something as complicated as preventing kids from turning violent, the best approach may be a simple, "How are you doing?"

"Start talking to them. Find out what's going on," said Patricia Williams-Myrick, principal of Oakland's Street Academy High School for 28 years.

"Don't ever accuse. When I see something different in a kid, I pull them aside. I say, 'I need to talk to you.'"

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A rickety fishing boat faced off Saturday against one professor from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wielding a bullhorn and six mechanical engineering students manipulating 300 mirrors, and survived their attempt to duplicate a fabled "death ray" that torched a Roman fleet 2,000 years ago.

There was smoke. There was charring.

Eventually, after focusing hot beams of light on one side of the boat for more than 2½ hours, and dragging the vessel to within 75 feet of the array of mirrors, there was even a small fire.

"We have flames inside," came the excited cry from a man standing on the deck of 30-foot wooden

the boat."

The crowd, which included a film crew from the TV show *Myth-Busters*, a Discovery Channel series, erupted in whoops, cheers, clapping and hurrahs.

But when the fire fizzled a couple minutes later, they dissolved into wisecracks.

"Maybe it's not a *death ray*," one person said. "It's an *ouch ray*."

"It's a *marshmallow ray*," said another.

Still, MIT Professor David Wallace wasn't willing to concede defeat.

"I still don't want to be a person to underestimate Archimedes," he said, referring to the Greek mathematician who, according to some

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Chronicle Watch



Working for a better Bay Area

What's in the works

Berkeley traffic circle hit: The Marin Circle Fountain is the pride of 1,200 residents and business owners who raised \$100,000 to have it restored in 1996.



Who's responsible: Marc Seleznow, Berkeley parks and waterfront director; (510) 981-6700; parks@ci.berkeley.ca.us

But safety features have been damaged at the fountain, the centerpiece of a traffic circle in the Northbrae neighborhood. Tipster Gary Yee says a dozen bollards — squat cement pillars that ring the circle's outer rim — have been missing for months. The original 1911 fountain at Marin and Arlington avenues was destroyed by a truck nearly 50 years ago, and wayward drivers are still a problem. Sarah Holmes, a member a group that raised funds for the fountain, told us the bollards were hit by motorists on three separate occasions in July. "Many had been there only two weeks, as eight of them were knocked over about a year previously



and had only recently been replaced," she says, adding the police believe one of the incidents may have been deliberate. Holmes, who volunteers once a month to keep the circle spruced up, told us the parks department has only 10 of the \$300 bollards in stock. She said local residents have raised \$600 to offset the cost of new ones. **Status:** Acting parks director Cliff Marquette told us the rest of the bollards are on order and will be installed when they arrive, probably by mid-November. To help with maintenance or make a donation, call Holmes at (510) 526-5347.

— Suzanne Pullen

ON THE WATCH LIST

DAY 407 City working on relocating statue of Juan Bautista de Anza by year's end.

Who's responsible: Richard



wirth@sfgov.org

Newirth, San Francisco cultural affairs director; (415) 252-2590; Richard.newirth@sfgov.org

DAY 589 City planning on work for eastern end of Vallejo's Wonderland Park.



648-4603; smcafee@gvr.org

Who's responsible: Shane McAfee, Greater Vallejo Recreation District manager; (707) 648-4603; smcafee@gvr.org

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