

City & Region

Monday, February 19, 1996

Philadelphia Online: <http://www.phillynews.com>

Obituaries, B5.
Weather, B6.

Some N.J. towns had hoped a federal agency would bolster their shorelines. It may not happen.

Beach studies proceed amid shifting political sands

By Mark Davis

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

ATLANTIC CITY — It's only paperwork right now — nothing more than castles in the air, perhaps, to critics of government-funded beach replenishment.

But for others, plans under way in Philadelphia and Washington could signify castles of another sort — the sandy variety.

Will there be enough building material? The answer could make a multibillion-dollar difference in the future along the Jersey Shore.

"The beach is what ultimately defines Atlantic City," Mayor Jim Whelan said when

he hosted a recent visit of state and federal officials who came to view beach erosion along sections of the Boardwalk.

The visit was just one step in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' surveys of the New Jersey coastline to assess the possibility of pumping sand onto some of the state's eroded beaches. They've already completed some surveys, which are under review in Washington.

The efforts come at a crucial time for beach communities from Manasquan to Malibu. President Clinton has suggested cutting back the corps' activities in dredging and other coastline projects to save more

than \$900 million by 2000.

Coastal-state lawmakers in Washington are assailing the proposal. Corps officials, who publicly maintain a neutral posture about proposed budget matters, worry privately that such cutbacks would threaten coastlines everywhere — and maybe even endanger the federal agency's future.

Municipal futures also are at stake, say corps officials who routinely speak with representatives of beachfront communities.

"It [funding] is uncertain," said Zoltan L. Montvai, program manager for the corps' Directorate of Civil Works in Washington, who is reviewing the Philadelphia reports.

"There are no guarantees."

Only Ocean City and Cape May in South Jersey, and Monmouth Beach in North Jersey, have anything resembling a guarantee because they already have benefited from offshore sand pumping.

But what of Atlantic City and Surf City, Manasquan and Avalon? Federal officials say the future of those beaches, like that of the corps' involvement along the coast, remains as murky as storm-churned waves.

There was more money to go around in 1987, when Congress authorized the studies — reacting, in part, to widely reported incidents of pollution and declining beach-

fronts up and down the Shore.

Corps engineers started in January 1991 with an initial, or reconnaissance, survey beginning at Townsends Inlet in Cape May. Engineers reviewed the strand as far south as Cape May Inlet, taking a year to finish.

Other federal reconnaissance surveys, which cost about \$500,000 each, followed: Manasquan to Barnegat Inlet, Barnegat Inlet to Little Egg Harbor, Great Egg Harbor Inlet to Townsends Inlet, and Lower Cape May Meadows to Cape May Point on the eastern edge of Delaware Bay.

Also included: a review of Absecon Island. See **BEACHES** on B2



Among groups in the "Hip Hop & Cops United for Peace" show was Rufnez, whose members included Jamal Miller (right). More than 200 people turned out.

Rap benefit concert takes a bow to police

By Marjorie Valbrun

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

They came carrying only their lyrics and their battered pride, these scowled young men with the cool swaggers. The Geto Poet, Rufnez, Da Youngstas, Da Fat Cat Clique, Grand Hank and more than a dozen others. One after another they walked in, determined to make a difference.

Stung by a recent spate of negative publicity about rap music in general, and certain rappers in particular, these local rappers performed at a benefit concert yesterday that organizers said would raise money for a scholarship fund in memory of a city police officer who, authorities say, was slain by two former rap artists.

The irony of the event was lost on no one, particularly the rappers themselves, who readily admit that their image was further eroded by the widespread media coverage of the killing of Lauretha Vaird, a nine-year police veteran and mother of two.

Vaird was gunned down last month in a bungled bank robbery in which two former rappers and a third man have been

charged.

Two of the three members of Da Youngstas are cousins of Warren "Steady B" McGlone, the alleged driver during the robbery.

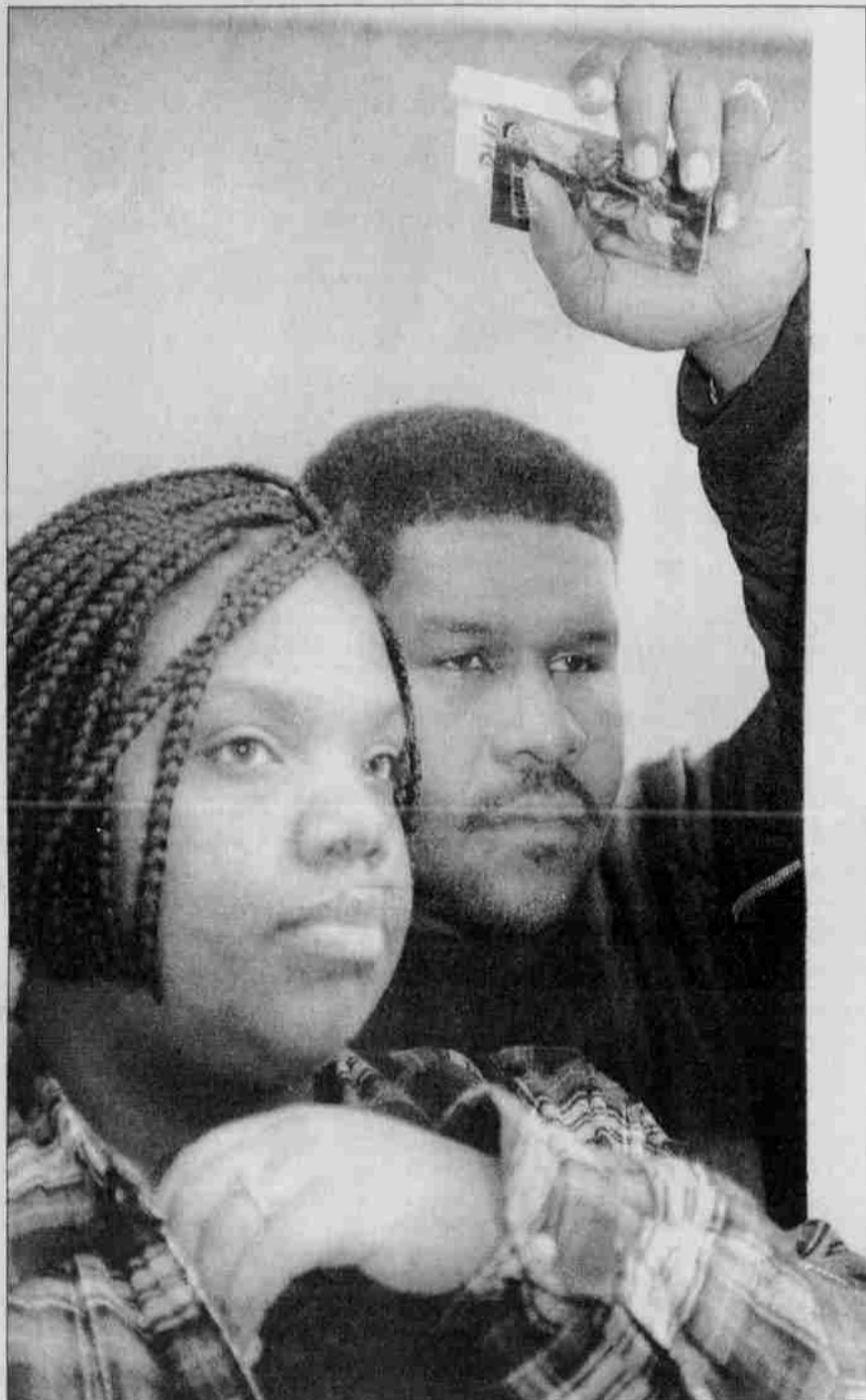
The other suspects are Ernest Mark Canty, 22, and Christopher "Cool C" Rooney, 26, who police say was the shooter. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for tomorrow.

"We're trying to bridge the gap between the rappers and the Philadelphia police," said the manager of one act.

The local rappers presented yesterday at Winners, a music club at 11th and Vine Streets, said they refuse to be tainted by the misdeeds of a few. These diehard adherents of hip-hop music said they held the concert to show their support for police officers and their opposition to the urban violence that is so much a part of rap music, and in some cases, rappers' lives.

"It's a good cause, you know what I'm sayin'," said a rapper who goes by the name Wise Intelligent.

"Hip-hop and cops. We're tryin' to stop some of the violence out here. Everybody knows hip-hop and cops weren't clicking too well, they weren't getting along. We were at each other's throats."



Nevlin Vaird attended the concert held to finance a scholarship in memory of his slain sister, Officer Lauretha Vaird. With him is his girlfriend, Keisha Branham.

The concert — "Hip Hop & Cops United for Peace" — was an attempt to change that troubled relationship, organizers said, to ease the longstanding tensions between rappers and police officers, who for years have mistrusted and disliked each other.

"We felt the hip-hop community would definitely be damaged with the allegations that two rappers were involved with Officer Vaird's killing," said Larry Anderson, manager of Da Fat Cat Clique, a local hip-hop group. "We're trying to bridge the gap between the rappers and the Philadel-

phia police."

Few police officers were in the audience of more than 200, though. Noticeably absent were representatives of the Guardian Civic League, an organization of black officers that originally was a sponsor of the event, then apparently pulled out.

Rhashidah Perry, who handled publicity for the event, said that was because of some initial confusion surrounding the Vaird family's support of the event and questions about whether the money

See **CONCERT** on B2

Police release baby's photo

Baby Mitch was found freezing under a van in Center City on Saturday. He was listed in serious condition yesterday.

By Jere Downs

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

His name, for now, is Baby Mitch. That's short for *emaciated*, which is how he was found after being abandoned beneath a parked van Saturday in Center City.

"It's a bad pun," Department of Human Services spokeswoman Patricia Bathurst said of the nickname for the 4-pound, 7-ounce foundling.

Officials released a photo of the baby boy yesterday in the hope that someone who knew him in his first two weeks of life might lead them to his mother.

"We're hoping this might have been a local birth delivered in a hospital," Bathurst said. "Maybe somebody who works in a maternity ward might remember a little boy or some neighbors might remember someone having a newborn."

For now, he remains wrapped in a white blanket at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, tethered to an intravenous feeding tube, a bracelet on his wrist reading "Baby John Doe," said hospital spokeswoman Carol Lynn Daly.

Baby Mitch was found in the 1100 block of Clover Street, between Chestnut and Market, about 4:30 p.m. Saturday. Police hope any passerby who saw someone with a baby in that area will come forward.

"It's not like it is a residential area," Lt. Joseph Wright said of the spot less than two blocks from City Hall.

Baby Mitch is the second infant abandoned to the elements only to be rescued by a passerby this winter

See **BABY** on B3

■ **Melissa Dribben** is on assignment. Her column will resume when she returns.

Looking for the Tao in science classrooms

The Templeton Foundation gives grants to colleges with ideas. Several in the area were recipients.

By David O'Reilly

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Welcome to Room 103 at the University of Pennsylvania's Williams Hall.

Here, lecturer William Grassie's portable computer can flash color images of living cells and space shots of Earth onto a big screen at the front of the room.

No crucifix, no Star of David, no statue of Buddha flanks the walls of Room 103. This is, after all, a secular university.

Carpeted, down-lit and flanked instead by sleek TV monitors, Room 103 has sophisticated electronics that testify to the privileged place of science in modern thought.

But can a secular, rational, scien-

tific world view completely plumb all the mysteries of the universe?

John M. Templeton, the rich, God-minded mutual funds magnate, thinks not.

So, thanks to a grant from his John Templeton Foundation, in Radnor, Penn. students can hear "big bang" and "God" and "Cenozoic" and "Christian" and "Tao" and "entropy" uttered in the same breath this semester. The foundation last year awarded 97 grants of \$10,000 apiece to fund college courses exploring the relationship between science and religion.

"It's often difficult in the scientific classroom to explore the spiritual implications of scientific dis-

See **STUDIES** on B2



A group from Romano's Landscaping trims grass stalks for a display as preparations continued for the opening Sunday of the Philadelphia Flower Show. This is the show's first year at the Convention Center. Story and more photos: **Busiv ss, D1.**

Today's lesson may be online — and at 1 a.m.

Community colleges redefining class acts

By David Kinney

INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

Ann Niggemann, an accounting teacher at Montgomery County Community College, never sees the handful of students enrolled in her spring course. Instead, she posts her lecture on a computer bulletin board each week.

At Burlington County College, Cindy Miller, 34, mother of three and president of an area charity, takes nearly all her sociology courses via videotapes and workbooks and with the help of a professor she rarely meets.

And in what is thought to be a first, students at Oklahoma City Community College take classes anytime — including a medical-terminology course at 11:30 p.m. and an emergency-management seminar at 1 a.m.

Gus Pekara, an administrator at OCCC, offers this slogan: "Anything you need you can get at any time of the day or night. Now you can get an education, too."

Shaken by a lagging economy and changing demographics, community colleges nationwide have awakened from their dizzying, decade-long run of skyrocketing enrollment and are taking advantage of increasingly pervasive technology, creative scheduling, and old-fashioned marketing savvy to win back students.

"There's definitely a need," said Rich Pokrass, president of the Delaware Valley Community College Marketing Group, an association of area public-information officials. "People's lives are changing, their jobs are changing, and they need

See **COMMUNITY COLLEGES** on B2