



NFL playoffs

Panthers avenge loss to Bears.
Colts can't finish comeback.
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Capoeira

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The Post and Courier

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MONDAY

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Today's best



New-age space race

Less-expensive receivers, star power fueling rise of satellite radio. **Section E**

Former C of C president Harry Lightsey Jr. dies

In addition to leading the college from 1986 to 1992, Lightsey was active in law, education and politics. Charleston Mayor Joe Riley called Lightsey "one of the finest lawyers in our state's history." **1B**



Israel to let Palestinians in east Jerusalem vote

The unanimous decision by the Cabinet came hours before doctors performed a tracheotomy on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in an effort to wean him off of a respirator. A brain scan Sunday showed no change in the leader's condition. **3A**

Republican to step aside as committee chairman



Rep. Bob Ney of Ohio will temporarily resign as head of the House Administration Committee, which controls disclosures of lobbying practices. Ney has been under pressure to relinquish his post after statements from lobbyist Jack Abramoff implicated him in a corruption investigation. **3A**



This house was being restored before Katrina blew it onto its neighbor.

Many classic buildings left unscathed by storm

Hurricane Katrina did not damage many of New Orleans' oldest structures, located along the Mississippi River. But the fate of buildings in less-elevated sections of the city remains unclear. **1B**



Today's outlook
Pleasant with high clouds. High 63, Low 48. Complete 5-day forecast, **8B**.

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A Berkeley revolution?

Bills would limit school board authority

BY YVONNE M. WENGER
The Post and Courier

State Sen. Larry Grooms wants Berkeley County residents to never again be shocked by their school taxes.

The Bonneau Republican says he thinks he can make that happen. He introduced legislation that would stifle the Berkeley County School Board's authority to borrow money for capital improvements, take away its power to set the tax rate and strip its ability to collect any new revenue

Inside Payment plan proposed for property taxes. **1B**

during a reassessment year. "What prompted me? The number of calls from my constituents asking, 'What can be done to rein in the Berkeley County School Board?'" Grooms said. The school district has been under fire since October, when some property owners saw their taxes increase by

Please see **BILL**, Page 7A

Students losing out on King experience

Copyright keeps many from speech

BY VALERIE STRAUSS
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — It is the time of year when students are taught about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, so passionately delivered that his call for freedom changed U.S. history. Once heard, it is impossible to forget.

But many students won't get to hear it, and most who do will hear only snippets, educators and historians said. And that, they said, is affecting the legacy of the pre-eminent civil rights leader, whose life will be honored

Inside

Several events to celebrate holiday. **1B**
Excerpt from "Beyond Vietnam." **2B**
Jesse Jackson speaks in Upstate. **3B**

today with an annual federal holiday. "It lessens the historical saliency of King for younger kids," said Robert Brown, assistant dean of undergraduate education at Emory University in Atlanta who specializes in African-American politics. "It is one thing to read King and another to see him. Hearing him is so much more powerful than reading it."

All of King's speeches and papers are owned by his family, which has gone to Please see **SPEECH**, Page 7A

Tracking 'Alligatorzilla' Gator is huge — and possibly bashful



MELISSA HANELINE/STAFF

The gator dubbed "Alligatorzilla" by Chris Crolley, chief executive officer of Coastal Expeditions, suns itself on Bull's Island last month.

BY CHRIS DIXON
The Post and Courier

Why can't you find Alligatorzilla when you need him?

That was the question on Chris Crolley's mind as he tramped through an alligator-infested pond on Bull's Island, armed with a tape measure, a pair of waders and a heaping helping of courage.

A few weeks back, while leading a bird-watching expedition on this very pond at the island's north end, the captain of the Bull Island Ferry pointed out a truly enormous alligator on a far bank. When asked the creature's size, Crolley responded that "Alligators aren't supposed to get that big," and estimated that it might be longer than 20 feet.

When his comment appeared in a Jan. 2 Post and Courier article about the migratory waterfowl wintering at Bull's Island, several vigilant readers noted that this would make the gator not only a state record, but a national one. Such a possibility prompted another trip with Crolley.

"In the last 13 or 14 years I've been paddling kayaks into places other people can't get in, and going places that maybe people shouldn't go," Crolley drawled while driving to the huge freshwater impoundment dubbed "Alligator Alley."

"As far as the biggest gators I've seen — there was one in the upper reaches of



MIC SMITH/STAFF

Chris Crolley wades in a pond Thursday on Bull's Island while trying to determine the size of the huge alligator he saw on a previous trip.

Sparkleberry Swamp. I swore he was a tree until he moved. But the largest one I've ever seen — it's the one out here."

On his trips into the southern boundaries of the Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge, Crolley typically points out that Bull's Island's 5,000 acres are among the most pristine places in America. This makes for an excellent place for a gator to grow undisturbed and unnoticed. He says that an alligator count he attended a few years back

with the state Department of Natural Resources Alligator Project Supervisor Walt Rhodes found a likely population of 800 to 1,000 alligators inhabiting the forests, marshes and swamps. This would give Bull's Island one of the highest such population densities of any place north of Florida.

"These estuaries have been untouched from prehistoric times," he said. "You leave an alligator to grow in its thriving natural habitat, they

If you go

Walt Rhodes, supervisor of the Alligator Project for the state Department of Natural Resources, says the best time to visit Bull's Island to try to spot Alligatorzilla would be a day when the air is chilly and the sun bright.

To line up a trip, call 884-7684 or visit www.coastalexpeditions.com.

will get as large as they can get."

The largest alligators Rhodes said he has seen in state waters were 12- to 13-footers in the waters around Sparkleberry Swamp near Lake Marion, the inland freshwater impoundments of the Santee River Delta and the Donnelly Wildlife Management Area of the ACE Basin. The largest gator ever recorded in the state was a 13-foot, 1-inch monster that a poacher shot in Sparkleberry Swamp. His stuffed remains are the property of the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia.

Yet even this gator is dwarfed by the American record, a 19-foot, 2-inch beast shot in Louisiana. Alligators can live more than 50 years.

Rhodes was sent a photograph and a grainy video of Alligatorzilla. While the reptile was surely not 20 feet long, Rhodes agreed it was a huge bull gator that could be a state record. When an alligator gets longer than 10 feet, its

Please see **GATOR**, Page 7A

More people leaving military since war began

BY MARTHA MENDOZA
Associated Press

Drug use, weight problems and parenthood have been taking their toll on the military in the past three years, since the war on terror began, according to newly released Pentagon data.

Documents released to The Associated Press under the Freedom of Information Act indicate the number of enlisted personnel leaving the military each year has

increased from 8.7 percent in 2002 to 10.5 percent last year.

Enlisted losses — including people whose enlistments had expired — increased from 118,206 in 2002 to more than 137,465 last year, while officer losses have increased from 5,619 in 2002 to more than 7,500 last year.

The subset of those leaving before their term was up, for reasons such as disability and drug abuse, increased from 58,214 in 2002 to 60,406 last year among enlisted

personnel and from 1,011 in 2002 to 1,280 for officers.

"Service members leave the military for a variety of reasons," said Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke. "This is an all-volunteer military, which is dedicated to defending its country. We appreciate their service and respect their reasons for leaving the service."

Krenke said the military met and in some cases exceeded its retention goals this year.

None of the 1.4 million soldiers, sailors and Marines on active duty today are allowed to simply quit the military, but they can be kicked out, or in certain cases receive special discharges.

The reasons for leaving the service differ in each branch, though general misconduct — a term that can include petty theft or brawling with colleagues — has consistently been the most common explanation.

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