

Want to Buy a Reef?

KEY WEST, Florida (AP) An online auction is taking place for the right to name an artificial reef project organizers hope to establish off the Florida Keys. The artificial reef is to be created by sinking the retired US Air Force missile-tracking ship General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, which monitored NASA space launches from 1963 to 1983. Leaving a legacy won't come cheap, though. Bidding begins at \$900,000 US, with a reserve price of \$1.3 million.

**HMCS HURON to be used as Target Practice**

Canadian warship HMCS HURON will be towed out to sea off the west coast of Vancouver Island next year and used for target practice. The Canadian Navy will tow the decommissioned destroyer to a firing range 100km out in the Pacific Ocean next May where Canadian and U.S. navies will open fire and send the 34-year-old ship to the bottom. This is the first time the Canadian Navy has used a ship for target practice; in the past it has sold old vessels for scrap or turned them into artificial reefs for divers. Rob Huebert, a military historian at the University of Calgary, says lack of parts and too few sailors sealed Huron's fate. "We did not have enough personnel to properly man her, so that ultimately her systems deteriorated to such a point that economically it made more sense to get rid of her rather than keeping her on as one of the 4 destroyers." Huron was commissioned in 1972, saw service in the Persian Gulf during 1st Gulf War, and has been tied up at dock at CFB Esquimalt since 2001. She was officially retired from service last year.

UNUSUAL VESSEL

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica 19 Nov 2006
The US Coast Guard seized a homemade submarine carrying 3.5 tonnes of cocaine off Costa Rica and arrested two Columbians, a Guatemalan and a Sri Lankan. The submarine, made of wood and fiberglass, was unlike military submarines or those used by oceanographers. The six-foot-wide, 45-foot-long vessel had traveled hundreds of miles from Columbia on its way to the United States before being discovered. It could only submerge 6 feet under water and was equipped with three tubes breaking the surface allowing the alleged smugglers to breathe.



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Swooning Swan: UPDATE

The swan we told you about last year who fell in love with a swan-shaped paddle boat has been moved to a zoo with his plastic partner. Biologists in Muenster, north-western Germany say the rare Black Australian Swan has been showing all the typical signs of love for its species: circling, staring endlessly at it, and making crooning noises, and now the swan refuses to fly south for the winter without his mate. Park keepers say that 'Black Peter', as the lovesick swan is known, refused to leave the boat on Aasee Lake. Boat-owner Peter Overschmidt has agreed to send both the boat and the swan to the Allwetter Zoo to spend the winter.

**The Cost of Christmas 2006**

The cost of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* is up 3.1 percent over last year, according to PNC Financial Services Group. Buying each item in the song once will now cost you \$18,920 US; the total cost once all the verses are repeated rings in at \$75,122 US. This year it appears that the wages for skilled workers, including dancers and musicians, have increased as the labour market has tightened up. While the price for the partridge, turtledoves, French hens, geese and swans remains stable, dancing ladies and lords a-leaping wages are up 4 and 3 percent respectively. The maids a-milking are not as lucky. They make the US federal minimum wage of \$5.15/hour, having not received a wage increase since 1997. Trying for on-line deals won't help much either. Buying the items over the internet will set you back \$125,767 US, mainly due to shipping costs.

**Internet Parodies of 'The Night Before Christmas'**

It is doubtful that there is a more parodied poem in the English language than Clement Clarke Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (more popularly known as "The Night Before Christmas"). The meter of "St. Nick" is infectious, its rhyme scheme cheery and simple, its homespun, nostalgic imagery ripe for spoofing. In celebration of the holiday season, go to www.ubanlegends.about.com to find a version to suit your needs!

Upcoming Events

Watch for the Coastal Watch booth at the Vancouver International Boat Show, held at BC Place Stadium, February 7-11th, 2007.

**WISHING YOU SMOOTH SAILING THIS
HOLIDAY SEASON, AND BEST WISHES
FOR A FANTASTIC NEW YEAR!**