

**PLAY IT COOL**

Sunny but cool today, with highs near 40; increasing clouds and cold tonight.

**Forecast, D6**

**50¢**

\$2.40 per week by carrier

# The Providence Journal

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**FRIDAY**  
DECEMBER 29, 2006

**METRO CITY EDITION**

2006 New England Newspaper of the Year

## R.I. educator to run Oprah's S. Africa academy

Joan Countryman, the retired head of the Lincoln School, is the interim headmistress of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for poor girls, which opens next week.

**BY JENNIFER D. JORDAN**  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Joan Countryman stepped down as head of the prestigious all-girls Lincoln School on Provi-

dence's East Side a year and a half ago, saying that after a dozen years she was ready to enjoy retirement, her family and her summer home in Little Compton.

Retirement didn't last long. On Wednesday, Countryman, 66, boarded a 14-hour flight to Johannesburg, South Africa, to start her new job — running a new \$40-million school for girls started by Oprah Winfrey. The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy will open Tuesday. The television talk-show host and

billionaire known for her philanthropy has said that founding the school "is the best thing I have ever done," and has personally overseen every detail of the project, from the construction and decoration of the campus' 26 buildings, to hiring the 16 faculty and selecting the uniforms, clothes, dishes and silverware the students will use.

"When I got the call, I said there are not many things I am saying yes to these days," Countryman said in a phone interview

as she waited to board her flight at Dulles Airport in Virginia. "But how could I say no to a school in South Africa for poor girls?"

A friend who heads an independent school in California contacted Countryman about six months ago. She asked if Countryman would serve as a consultant for Winfrey's ambitious plan to start an all-girls boarding school in a village, Henly-on-Klip, one hour south of Johannesburg. The school would strive to educate the complete

person — intellectually, spiritually and emotionally — and would give poor girls an opportunity to gain leadership skills and help shape the future of their country.

Intrigued, Countryman flew to South Africa in August and helped to interview some of the girls being considered for the inaugural class of seventh and eighth graders. In the end, 152 girls were chosen, and the

SEE **SCHOOL, A8**



Joan Countryman

## Somali troops capture capital

The transitional government ousts Islamist fighters with help from Ethiopian forces and U.S. approval.

**BY JEFFREY GETTLEMAN**  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

**NAIROBI, Kenya** — Just hours after Islamist fighters abandoned Mogadishu, the capital from which they ruled much of southern Somalia, thousands of troops of the nation's transitional government marched into the city yesterday in a stunning reversal of fortune.

The government soldiers and the Ethiopian infantrymen who have been backing them poured in from the outskirts of the city, residents said. The only gunshots fired were long, celebratory bursts into the air.

In a country with such a troubled recent history, including famine, anarchy, isolation and war, a potentially viable government has suddenly emerged.

In a matter of five days, the internationally recognized government, a fledgling authority that had been so weak it was marooned in a provincial market town, captured the formidable capital and most of southern Somalia — with more than a little help from Ethiopia.

The Islamists, who many Western nations had considered a grave and growing regional threat with terrorist connections, were vanquished faster than anyone

SEE **SOMALIA, A9**

### OUT OF SEASON



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KATHY BORCHERS

You're not the only one disoriented by this month's unusually warm temperatures. The mild weather tricked this crab apple tree in front of 225 Melrose St. in Providence yesterday into sprouting spring blossoms.

## No fraud found in emissions contract

The state purchasing agent acted fairly in the award of the contract to supervise Rhode Island's vehicle emission and safety inspection program, says a Superior Court judge.

**BY MICHELLE J. LEE**  
JOURNAL ENVIRONMENT WRITER

**PROVIDENCE** — The two-month battle over the state's multimillion-dollar auto-emissions testing contract is finished, and SysTech International LLC will be the new company running the program.

Superior Court Judge Michael A. Silverstein ruled yesterday in favor of state purchasing officials, who selected SysTech over Applus International Inc. to supervise Rhode Island's vehicle emission and safety inspection program.

The ruling clarifies the uncertainty of which company will conduct the state-mandated tests next year. Rhode Island drivers are required by law to have their vehicles tested to meet safety and emission standards. The state currently has 294 inspection stations that conduct about 350,000 tests a year.

"Ultimately, the taxpayers of Rhode Island have won here," said Brian P. Stern, an executive director of the state Department of Administration. "We've sent a message to all businesses out there that the state is open for business."

For now, drivers should see little change. While the \$47 testing fee stays the same, the division of the money will change. Drivers now pay \$13 for the test, \$18 to the inspection station and \$16 to the state. Under the new contract, drivers will

SEE **EMISSIONS, A9**

## Bush making 'progress' on Iraq plan

But the president is likely to face Democratic opposition if his new strategy includes an expected call for additional U.S. troops.

**BY JAMES GERSTENZANG**  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

**CRAWFORD, Texas** — President Bush said yesterday that he was "making good progress" toward redrawing his strategy for Iraq, a plan aides said would encompass economic and political ele-

ments as well as new security procedures to stem sectarian violence and counter a thriving insurgency.

It appeared increasingly likely, but not certain, that the latest effort to shore up the Iraq campaign would include sending additional U.S. troops there and that the president would launch his strategy in a speech to the nation when Congress returns to Washington next week or soon after.

Democratic leaders reiterated their opposition to any increase in the number

of U.S. troops in Iraq.

Mr. Bush held a morning-long meeting of key members of the National Security Council at his office on his Texas ranch, continuing the discussions at lunch. Before making final decisions, Mr. Bush said he wanted to hold additional consultations, including with members of Congress.

The administration has attached great importance not only to the substance of

SEE **BUSH, A4**

## One Middletown mansion with storied past: \$5 million

Built for the brother of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth, the 5,000-square-foot Boothden on the Sakonnet River is being bought by a Massachusetts couple.

**BY RICHARD SALIT**  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

**MIDDLETOWN** — The seaside mansion built for Edwin Booth, the famous tragic actor whose brother assassinated President Abraham Lincoln, will be sold for more than \$5 million.

In addition to its ocean views and 5 acres on the Sakonnet River, the Boothden estate boasts a storied past, one that involves the Booth brothers, an ex-wife of Ernest Hemingway, the Oscar Award-winning movie *The Sting* and a renowned local sailor and businessman.

"The property is fascinating," said Elena Wilcox, an agent for Lila Delman Real Estate. "There is so much romance and history."

Not only that, she said, "It might be one of the most beautiful properties in Middletown and maybe Newport."

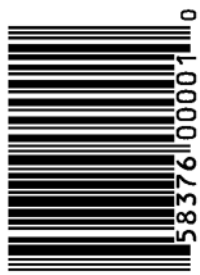
Wilcox said Boothden is under agreement to be sold next month for between \$5 million and its asking price of \$5.39 million, about one half to one-third of what the most valuable properties have gone for on Aquidneck Island. The buyers are a

SEE **MANSSION, A9**

## BROWN RETURNS TO THE APOLLO

The Rev. Al Sharpton stands next to the 24-carat coffin containing James Brown during a public viewing yesterday on the stage of the Apollo Theater in Harlem. Brown achieved national stardom following the release in 1963 of his critically acclaimed "Live at the Apollo, Vol. 1" album. **Story, A2.**

NYT / NICOLE BENVIGNO



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### SHINE OFF OF APPLE?

Shares of Apple Computer Inc. fall more than 1.5 percent after new details of a federal investigation into the company raises questions about the role of its charismatic CEO, Steve Jobs. **F1**

### NEW DOT CHIEF

Governor Carcieri names Jerome F. Williams as the new director of the state Department of Transportation. **B1**

### FORD'S LASTING LEGACY

As the nation reflects on Gerald R. Ford's term as president, many argue that his most enduring legacy is the people who first came to power during his time in office, including Donald H. Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. **A7**

