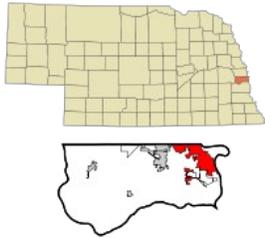




### Top Stories



#### 9 killed in Omaha, Nebraska mall shooting

#### Former 'Top Model' contestant Whitney Cunningham defends plus size models, celebrates the "regular woman"



Wikinews reporter Mike Halterman interviews former America's Next Top Model contestant Whitney Cunningham about her experiences on the show, her hopes and dreams, and why she doesn't consider herself "plus size."

### Wikipedia Current Events

Car bombs in Baghdad and three northern Iraqi cities kill at least 22 people and injure more than 60 others.

- A man opens fire at a mall in Omaha, USA, killing eight, before committing suicide.
- A suicide bomber rams a car into a minibus containing Afghan soldiers on a highway south of Kabul. Thirteen, including six Afghan soldiers, are killed in the incident.

#### 9 killed in Omaha, Nebraska mall shooting

A man with a rifle opened fire at a busy department store at the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska Wednesday, killing at least 8 people and injuring five, before taking his own life. The massacre started just before 2 p.m. CST (UTC-6). Three of the wounded are in critical condition.

that the suspect was tall and was found on the third floor, though reports conflict as to his exact location, he was thought to be located in the customer service area of the store. Reports later confirmed that almost all if not all of the shootings occurred within the store.

Reports say that the alleged gunman was 20-year-old Robert A. Hawkins from Bellevue, who left a suicide note in his home stating, "I'm going out in style."

The shooting started near the outside entrance to the Von Maur department store when the man began to open fire with a "rifle." Eye witnesses suggest that at least 30 shots were fired with some saying up to 100 shots, however many people thought that it was fireworks or construction noise from nearby works outside the store. Seven people were pronounced dead at the scene and two were pronounced upon arrival at hospital.

President George W. Bush gave an address in Omaha regarding healthcare on Wednesday morning but had left the city hours before the incident.

"We are setting up a station at the Hampton Inn for families and the victims," added the spokesman. The injured are being taken to the University of Nebraska Medical Center or the Creighton University Medical Center.

Police are not releasing names

### Featured story

#### Al Sharpton speaks out on race, rights and what bothers him about his critics



Al Sharpton of the National Action Network answers his critics in this exclusive interview with Wikinews'

David Shankbone. In it they discuss Don Imus, Tawana Brawley and the Presidential race.

[http://en.wikinews.org/Al\\_Sharpton\\_speaks\\_out\\_on\\_race\\_%2C\\_rights\\_and\\_what\\_bothers\\_him\\_about\\_his\\_critics](http://en.wikinews.org/Al_Sharpton_speaks_out_on_race_%2C_rights_and_what_bothers_him_about_his_critics)

The complex was immediately locked down with people only permitted to leave the immediate mall area, however some people remained in stores and cupboards to avoid the shootings. Police and SWAT teams arrived on the scene within 6 minutes and proceeded into the complex to find the suspect who was pronounced dead at the scene.

"The shooter is male, and has died from a self inflicted gunshot wound," said a Omaha Police spokesman during a live press conference. Reports also suggest

until all family members can be notified.

### **US Supreme Court considers appeal from foreign terrorist suspects**

The U.S. Supreme Court has heard a plea that terrorism suspects being held at the U.S. Naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, should be given the opportunity to challenge their detention in American courts.

Demonstrators outside the court chanted and waved signs calling on the nine high court justices to grant the detainees habeus corpus, the age-old legal principle that allows prisoners to challenge their detention before a neutral judge. Inside the court, attorney and former US Solicitory General Seth Waxman argued on behalf of a group of 37 detainees, part of the 305 prisoners now being held at Guantánamo.

"All have been confined at Guantánamo for almost six years," he said. "Yet, not one has ever had meaningful notice of the factual grounds of detention, or a fair opportunity to dispute those grounds before a neutral decision-maker."

But Waxman appeared to have little success in convincing some of the high court's more conservative justices that the Guantanamo detainees have a constitutional right to challenge their detentions in court. Among the skeptical was Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

"You are appealing to a common law right that somehow found its way into our Constitution without, as far as I can discern, a single case in which the writ [right] was ever issued to a non-citizen," he said.

Some of the other justices appeared more sympathetic, including Justice Stephen Breyer.

"Now it has been six years, and habeus is supposed to be speedy, and yet people have serious arguments anyway that they are being held for six years without even having those arguments heard," he said.

Since January 2002, more than 750 people have been held. Many of the 305 prisoners at Guantánamo have complained of abuse and almost all have been confined for years without charges. Around 470 other prisoners have been released over the years, and the U.S. said it intends to try 60 to 80 of those currently in detention.

Since 2002, just three prisoners have been formally charged, and only one has been convicted, as part of a plea bargain. David Hicks, an Australian citizen, who admitted to training with al-Qaeda, was repatriated to Australia to serve a nine-month prison sentence.

The Supreme Court ruled against the Bush administration in two previous cases concerning the legal rights of the Guantánamo detainees. Congress got involved in the issue in 2006 and passed a law that was designed to keep detainee appeals out of the civilian court system and refer them instead to military commissions.

But civil and legal rights groups say the alternative procedures set up by Congress and the Bush administration deprive the detainees of basic rights.

"At issue here that the Supreme Court decided was; 'Do we have a king in this country who is not

bound by the rule of law and not bound by the Constitution? Or do we have a president that is subject to the Constitution?," said Vincent Warren, executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Conservative legal scholars argue against U.S. constitutional protections for foreign terrorist suspects.

"If the courts are going to be in charge of the conduct of warfare, we are going to be a much less safe country," said Andrew C. McCarthy, who is with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

A decision by the Supreme Court in the Guantánamo case is expected before the end of June.

### **GOES-12 weather satellite fails during adjustment**

The weather satellite GOES-12, which provides most of the weather pictures for the United States, became unusable on Tuesday, December 4. The satellite is positioned in geostationary orbit over the Amazon. A normal station-keeping maneuver to adjust its location was not completed as usual and services could not be continued.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) operates the satellites for its National Weather Service (NWS). NOAA's satellite division intends to attempt Wednesday night to return GOES-12 to normal mode. The satellite is in its "safe" mode, which is used to protect it until problems can be identified and repaired. It is properly oriented toward the Sun so it will have full electrical power for further commands.

The GOES-10 satellite, located

slightly further east, has been taken from South American coverage and is providing North American service. GOES-13 is in orbital storage in case it is needed for replacing a failed satellite.

### "Dead" canoeist arrested after being missing for over 5 years

John Darwin, a canoeist who has been missing for over five years after disappearing while canoeing in 2002, has been arrested by Hampshire Police after walking into a police station in London, England. He is to be charged with fraud in connection with his disappearance in 2002.

It is believed that he has been charged with fraud after the release of a photo of Mr Darwin was released in a tabloid newspaper, the Daily Mirror, apparently showing him in Panama with his wife last year. His wife, who recently moved to Central America denies these claims saying that she had claimed the life insurance money and moved as she thought he would never return.

Detective Superintendent Hutchinson, the officer in charge of the case, said that "He was in apparent good health, tanned, well nourished and dressed," when he walked into the West End Central Police station in London four days ago. He also said that the disappearance of Mr Darwin "raised a lot of questions."

A public appeal for information about this incident was launched and it was made clear that the police believe that someone knows what happened to Mr Darwin. Also the police have confirmed that they had recently re-opened the investigation into Mr Darwin's disappearance due to "new evidence" being received.

Mrs Darwin has said that she may struggle to repay the £300,000 she claimed on the life insurance as she has started to spend some of the money.

### Bayern defender Ismael set to join Hanover

Bayern Munich defender Valerien Ismael will be leaving Bayern Munich when the transfer window opens on January 1, 2008.

He is set to sign a contract with Hanover that will see him playing at AWD Arena until June 2010.

Ismael has seen only 1 game since breaking his leg last season. Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld has been playing Lucio and Martin Demichelis as his top pairing Central Defenders with Daniel Van Buyten as his top reserve defender.

### Court finds South Yorkshire Chief Constable guilty of speeding

The Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police in England, Meredydd Hughes, was found guilty of speeding at Wrexham Magistrates Court today and banned from driving. He was caught driving at 90 mph where the speed limit was 60 mph. Wrexham Magistrates court disqualified Hughes from driving for 42 days and fined him £350.

The Chief Constable did not appear in court in person, but was represented by his solicitor, Huw Edwards. Mr Edwards said:

"He doesn't seek to make any excuse about this matter. He totally accepts that the police have a duty to do. He is no exception and he accepts that he must be punished for the offence."

"He asks me to apologise for the

offence. He recognises that the matter is a serious matter."

Hughes had already received six penalty points on his license from previous speeding convictions and a conviction for failing to identify the speeding driver of one of his force's vehicles in 2006, although his driving licence was free of points at the time he went to court. Wrexham Magistrates Court had adjourned the case to today from a date in late November, as Meredydd Hughes initially claimed that he has still not yet found a solicitor to represent him.

Matthew Elliot, the Chief Executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, criticized Hughes for wasting Court time at the taxpayer's expense. "Meredydd Hughes has shown breathtaking hypocrisy in this case," said Elliot. "Not only has he been caught preaching one thing and doing another in the past, but he has also wasted court time and therefore taxpayers' money."

Jools Townsend, speaking for the Road Safety Campaign group Brake, said the offence was "Shocking" and the sentence "lenient" - and that the Chief Constable should "Seriously consider his position as a result".

The incident is embarrassing for South Yorkshire Police, as Hughes was the Chair of ACPO's road policing enforcement committee, with responsibility for developing police policies about how speed cameras are used. Hughes is a supporter of mobile speed cameras and believes that all speed cameras should be deliberately hidden from motorists, and has given interviews on the importance of road safety management in businesses.

## Opening positions spark debate at Global Climate Change Conference

At the U.N. conference on Global Climate change in Bali, the early talk has focused on whether some of the major developed countries will commit to cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the coming years. European states are pushing for steep reductions in emissions, but environmentalists accuse some others of dragging their feet.

The European Union's climate chief, Artur Runge Metzger, says his organization wants greenhouse emissions cut by half by the middle of the century.

"We would like to see global average temperatures rise no more than an average of two degrees compared to pre-industrial levels," Metzger said. "And that would require that global emissions go down by at least 50 percent of the 1990 emissions by the year 2050."

Greenhouse emissions are thought to be causing global warming. Metzger downplayed differences between the EU and other countries on reduction targets, saying he believes the response to the 50 percent proposal has been increasingly positive. He noted that Japan, Canada and some members of the U.S. congress have expressed support for the idea.

Those same countries, however, have been targeted by environmental groups, who say they have failed in their initial statements here to come out strongly enough for significant cuts. Hans Verolme of the group WWF says Japan is being criticized for not including binding targets in its proposal for emission control discussions.

"That in our view would be quite disastrous. It would delay action and it would in fact lead to dangerous climate change," Verolme said.

Japan says its proposal is merely an attempt to get the conversation started, and U.N. climate change chief Yvo de Boer has also sought to downplay any differences. De Boer repeatedly points out that the Bali conference is not meant to produce a new climate-change treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol. That 1997 agreement is set to expire in 2012.

"This meeting in Bali will not finalize a post-2012 climate change deal, that's much too complicated to do in 10 days, but what it can do is put in place a two-year process to work towards such a deal," De Boer said.

Even the two-degree temperature rise that the European Union talks about is predicted to have serious effects on humans and the environment. The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted such a rise would increase the frequency of damaging storms, and make 30 percent of the world's species more vulnerable to extinction.

Thousands of delegates from more than 180 countries are meeting in Bali, which is due to run through December 14.

## Taiwanese coalitions argue over ex-President's monument

The central government of Taiwan's attempts to remove symbols referring to Chiang Kai-shek from the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, have led to a major debate between the Pan-Green and Pan-Blue coalitions and the public. The Ministry of Education

wants to remove the title from the "Gate of Great Centrality and Perfect Uprightness" along the Hall. Chiang Kai-shek of the Kuomintang (part of the pan-Blue coalition) was the leader of the national government from 1928 to 1975, and the Hall was built as a Memorial after his death.

Officials from Taipei City Government and Pan-Blues firmly opposed the plan, but relatives and survivors from the 228 Incident (a Taiwanese uprising that started on February 28, 1947 that was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang government under Chiang Kai-Shek) and Pan-Greens are in favor.

In fact, members from "League of Redress White-terror in 1950's" claimed in a press conference: "The slaughterer [referring to Chiang Kai-shek and relatives] should admit and apologize for his faults so that we can consider on forgiveness," and stressed: "DAMN IT! Why is the public still supporting the slaughterer and autocrat? How can an autocrat's virtues be eulogized? The public in other countries can trace on the truth from history and jury for the slaughterer, why can't it be so in Taiwan?"

The debate has become a topic in the 2008 Taiwanese Presidential elections. Kuomintang Candidate Ying-jeou Ma said: "If I win this election, I'll put the title back!" After the current President of the Republic of China Shui-bian Chen heard those words, he replied: "Did he mean on Lian-ying Li's?" But the Vice President Annette Lu said: "Depend on what Frank (Hsieh) will say."

## American poker player Chip Reese dies at age 56

David Edward "Chip" Reese, an

American professional poker player, died on December 4, 2007, at the age of 56. Reese passed away in his sleep at his Las Vegas, Nevada home from the effects of pneumonia.

Reese is generally considered a legend in the world of poker. In 1991, he became the youngest living player to be inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame. His last major win came at the 2006 World Series of Poker, where he won US \$1,784,640 in the HORSE event.

"Chip Reese was probably the most successful poker player in history," said Mike Sexton. "Chip has always been admired by players for his success, his demeanor at the table."

"I knew him for 35 years, I never saw him get mad or raise his voice," Doyle Brunson said. "He had the most even disposition of anyone I've ever met. He's certainly the best poker player that ever lived."

His career spanned multiple decades and Reese made the majority of his money when poker gained publicity through national television exposure starting around the turn of the century. Though he never won the "Main Event" in Texas hold'em at the World Series of Poker, Reese was very successful.

"He was a family man like no one else in poker," said fellow poker professional Barry Greenstein. "No matter what the situation was, if his kids had something going on — a baseball game, a recital, whatever — he would quit to go to it."

"Probably a lot of us were jealous of him that he was able to do that — that he had done well enough in

poker, that he could always take time off of poker to be involved with his kids," Greenstein added.

Reese earned a degree from Dartmouth College and was accepted to law school at Stanford University, but he was drawn by the lure of big winnings and chose instead to earn his living at the poker table. He once told a reporter that law "doesn't have the same monetary incentive as poker."

### **Former 'Top Model' contestant Whitney Cunningham defends plus size models, celebrates the "regular woman"**

Once you get a chance to talk to West Palm Beach, Florida native Whitney Cunningham, who placed seventh on the eighth cycle of the popular reality TV series America's Next Top Model, you begin to understand what host Tyra Banks meant when she described her as the "full package."

First of all, she is confident and headstrong, which is a must on these kinds of shows, almost as much as it is to take a beautiful modelesque picture. Second, she turns that confidence into drive. She has been receiving steady work as a model since leaving the show, and still believes that her goal of being the first woman to wear a size ten dress on the cover of Vogue is in reach. Third, and probably most important to television viewers, she obliterates the age-old model stereotype that to be pretty and photograph well, one must also be vapid and without a thought. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Cunningham also dreams of becoming a writer, and is working toward dual goals: a model who can express herself like no other model before her.

Cunningham recently sat down

with Wikinews reporter Mike Halterman in an impassioned interview, taking hours to field questions from the reporter as well as from fans of America's Next Top Model. Always in high spirits, Cunningham shows that she is a distinct personality who has carved her own niche in the Top Model history books. At the same time, Whitney shows a joie de vivre that is oddly reminiscent of earlier Top Model fan favorite Toccara Jones, who showed America just how to be "big, black, beautiful and loving it." However, Cunningham is quick to remind everyone that she isn't big at all; she is simply a regular woman.

This is the first in a series of interviews with America's Next Top Model contestants. Interviews will be published sporadically.

### [Whitney's beginnings, and looking back](#)

Whitney was going to be interviewed with fellow Top Model contestant Keenyah Hill, but the interviews were ultimately done separately. Whitney and Keenyah, both based in New York City, chitchat before the interview about the restaurant where Keenyah works. Keenyah wonders if Whitney has ever eaten there, and to Keenyah's surprise, Whitney has. They make plans to keep in touch after the interview. Whitney's interview followed later.

Mike Halterman: So, who were the people you looked up to and inspired you to pursue modeling? Whitney Cunningham: You know modeling was something that I was always interested in, but I would have to say that modeling was not an interest of mine that took a priority over my other interests. I've always been a basketball player and someone who was serious about academic

achievement so I looked up to people who were eminent in those areas—i.e., Cheryl Miller and Maya Angelou. I would have to say that Tyra Banks was probably someone I always revered because she has always been such a trailblazer and that is a huge quality and characteristic I strive for in myself.

MH: Did you follow America's Next Top Model before appearing on the show, and if so, who did you like?

WC: Who didn't [follow Top Model]! I was a Top Model fiend in the first couple of cycles it was on the air. I loved Yaya because she was the educated chocolate "sista" [who was] much like myself.

MH: If you could quickly summarize your experience on the show, how would you describe it?

WC: It was an absolutely memorable experience that I wouldn't change for anything in the world. Not too many people can they say that they've been a participant on a television series that has literally changed the face of popular culture in America and in countries worldwide.

MH: What do your friends and family think of your stint on reality TV?

WC: I think everyone was really excited for me. I think their general sentiments are that it's cool to see someone that you know inside and out be put on display for the whole world to see. I know there were times where I would make certain faces or have certain reactions and they would always say, "I know exactly what you were thinking."

MH: What were some of your specific pros and cons as a result of entering this contest?

WC: On the pro side, I would have to say that the exposure is incredible. I couldn't imagine how I

would have been propelled into the industry so quickly if I hadn't been on the show. On the con side, I'm not exactly sure what the show's impression is on the fashion industry. I try to always remain positive, though. I, personally, have definitely used the show to my advantage as best I know how.

Impact Top Model has on society

MH: Do you ever fear what negative effect the show will have on girls?

WC: I said before that ANTM has changed the face of popular culture in America and beyond and I'll say it again. We're living in a "Top Model Era." Every girl, woman, boy and man wants to be a model now. But everyone cannot be a model. Modeling is not just an "easy" way to bring in the big bucks. It takes hard work, dedication, some hustle, and it's not meant for everyone. I kind of feel like ANTM is selling a false dream for a lot of folks out there.

MH: Do you think that in some way the show can lead to girls developing an obsession with how they look, their weight, etc?

WC: I have to say no on this one. I applaud the show for their consistent efforts to try to show their viewers that beauty comes in all shapes, forms, sizes, colors, and creeds. I think that it has actually had a profoundly positive effect on the folks who watch. I can't tell you how many people stop me on the street or e-mail me just to thank me for being a role model and showing the world that very thing.

MH: Did Tyra encourage a certain standard among the girls (weight or otherwise) that was unhealthy?

WC: Not at all. I think that viewers think that we have a whole lot more interaction with Tyra than we actually do. We only really saw her

during panel and during our "interventions." [laughs]

MH: Do you think Tyra still believes her show is about finding "the next top model" even though none of the show's winners have had that success?

WC: [laughs] That is a phenomenal question. I don't think that the show gives its winners enough time to reign. The show puts out two cycles a year. While one cycle is airing, they are taping another and apparently the show is scheduled to continue until 2010! I think it was about finding a "Top Model" during the show's beginnings, but I think that über-success of the show has turned it into a profit-driven production. I just wish that the show would put more time and cultivation into their winners even after their cycle's conclusions. And I truly think that the show would see a return on cultivating their winners, because the show's credibility would increase.

MH: A fan wrote in to ask, "What struggles did you face on the show as a plus sized model?"

WC: I think that my biggest struggle was realizing that plus sized models and straight sized models are apples and oranges...I couldn't study magazines and try to develop my poses, because a woman who weighs 110 pounds and is 5'10" looks completely different when she shapes and curves her body than a woman who is 5'10" and weighs 175 pounds. I, therefore, had to figure things out as I went along. The other girls had a reference/vantage point to learn from. I'm still figuring things out.

MH: Do you think it was unfair for Tyra to ask that [studying magazines and developing your poses] of you and Diana,

considering that even though she's fuller-figured now, she has a lot more experience under her belt than you two did?

WC: Well, you know, I would say that it would have been fair if there were magazines for us to study! But there were none. That's why I think that it's so important that publications like Plus Model Magazine continue to blossom and flourish. I've learned more reading that magazine and getting to know the folks who write for that magazine than I ever learned about being a plus-sized model on ANTM. P.S. I'll be gracing the cover of that magazine in January of '08. Look out for me.

MH: It sounds like you're doing just fine for yourself. Which one fan also asked, "Have you faced adversity about your weight since being on the show?"

WC: Adversity?! Absolutely not. I don't think people understand that I am a regular woman. I wear a [size] ten for God's sake. It's so funny because people come up to me and they say, "Wow, you're not fat at all? You must have lost a lot of weight." I think I just came off looking heavier on TV...that, or people just had a distorted perception of what I should look like in person. As a matter of fact I'm about 10 pounds heavier than I was on the show now and people can't believe how "normal" I look. But that was my aim in going on the show, that a normal woman can actually have a place in the industry. She doesn't have to be a size 2 nor does she have to be a size 18.

MH: Another fan writes: Do you feel like "plus size" models are treated fairly? (I put "plus size" in quotes because I don't believe you are "plus size"!)

WC: No, I don't. I don't think that plus-sized models are given

enough respect and I don't think that folks value the plus-sized industry the way it should be valued. But I think it's because people don't know how much the plus-sized industry varies. Hell, Kim Kardashian could be considered a plus-sized model! But people automatically assume that plus-sized means obese and that no one who is obese could possibly be attractive, or sexy, or a model. But that's not the case.

#### Whitney's views on production and editing

MH: Do you believe the producers for shows such as Top Model intentionally pick people who are perhaps unstable, for better television?

WC: Absolutely. I understand it, though. When I have my own production/entertainment company and I'm brainstorming ideas for a show, or a book, or a commercial, etc., I'll think of what sort of concepts will accrue me the largest profit. The producers of Top Model think along the same lines. Mass consumers want to see stuff that's juicy! They don't want to watch boring characters every Wednesday night. They want someone who's fun and out of the ordinary.

MH: Can you explain what types of things the producers allow you to say or not say following your departure from the show?

WC: Well, the show is not taped live, so of course you're sworn to secrecy about what's happened during taping until the show actually airs.

MH: Who selects your best photo for each panel and do you think there are ulterior motives involved?

WC: Tyra says she selects the photos, but who knows. I don't know about ulterior motives, but

there were numerous times where I knew that I had taken a better photo than the one that appeared on the screen during panel. Every season girls say the same thing as well. It's interesting because in the last photo shoot I had before I was eliminated, Mr. Jay told me that I had finally figured out the art of modeling and I have successfully pulled off my shoot. Needless to say, I was eliminated and never saw it coming. I figured it was smooth sailing since the director of the photo shoot told me I looked like I knew what I was doing. It is what it is though. What can I say?

MH: How did they decide who was going to read the Tyra Mail for the episode? Was it random, planned, or was it really who 'discovered' the note each morning?

WC: It's definitely whoever discovered the note. Contrary to popular belief, the show isn't really scripted, planned, etc.

MH: Were you forced to fake your excitement over Tyra Mail?

WC: We weren't forced to do anything, but I think that we all knew what our "expected" reactions were to the Tyra Mail readings. We had all seen the show, we all knew what the girls acted like when Tyra Mail was read, so we basically just kind of did the same thing. It's supposed to be an exciting moment, you know?

#### Whitney takes more fan questions

MH: Do you still keep in touch with girls from your cycle? If so, who?

WC: Most definitely. I probably have hung out with Jaslene the most since we both live in New York together and that was my girl from the beginning. Diana and I still keep in touch. I still speak to Felicia every now and then, and Kathleen and I have been out on the town (she doesn't know it yet,

but she's my new hairdresser too. That girl has got a fierce weave game.)

MH: What were the pressures like in the house?

WC: I actually felt like the house was my refuge. It was home! It was where I could go and let my hair down, go to sleep, read a book, call my friends and family, etc. Some of the girls might say they hated it in the house, but I was really cool with mostly all of the girls so the house was somewhere I knew I could be and just be Whitney.

MH: Is it common for agencies or clients to contact you after seeing the show?

WC: No way. Models come a dime a dozen. Established modeling agencies have no reason to go out and chase girls. I'd say it's more common for companies to contact girls about making special appearances, but not modeling agencies. It's up to you to go out and find a modeling agency.

MH: And do you get contacted from the guest designers that appeared on your cycle?

WC: I, personally, never have.

MH: A fan really wanted to know, "Was Dionne as funny as she was on the show?"

WC: Dionne was really quiet and reserved. I was actually surprised to see how comedic she came off during her interviews.

MH: How did you feel when Dionne and Renee only got T-shirts as a prize for winning the acting challenge?

WC: Like I was the luckiest person in the world for winning the laser beam challenge. [laughs]

MH: There were a lot of negative reactions from fans when Jaslene

won. Do you think she was the best choice? If so, why? If not, who would have been the better choice and why?

WC: Oh, my God, negative reactions? Are you kidding? Jaslene was, without a doubt, the best model at the time on the show. The only possible negative reaction I could think of is that she's so thin. And what people don't know is that Jaslene could give me a run for my money in eating. [laughs] She's just naturally built the way she is.

MH: Some negative fan reactions were "How could Jaslene sell a product when she can't speak English well?" and "Model? She's not even pretty! She looks like a man!" Which, I wish I was making it up, but it's a rather loud fan voice on those points. What do you say to them about that? And following on that, do you think fans can be excessively cruel toward the contestants?

WC: Those "fans" can kiss my \_\_\_\_\_. She is from Puerto Rico and represents all that America is—a large nation made up of a multitude of people from different backgrounds and places. And Jaslene is beautiful as are we all. And yes, I do believe that the fans can be excessively cruel. I don't even consider those folks fans though. They're people who have nothing else better to do with themselves than sit around and bash reality TV contestants on anonymous blog sites.

MH: You and Diana were some of the only models in this cycle who were working toward a college degree. Did you feel that you were smarter than the other girls? Did people at your college watch Top Model to see you and root for you?

WC: Smarter? [laughs] I don't like that term because I'm an honest believer in the fact that people are

all relatively smart, just in different things. I would say that I was well versed in certain areas that others were not, but that doesn't mean I'm smarter per se. And yes, folks at my school definitely watched the show. I got really positive feedback! They said I represented well.

Where Whitney is today

MH: And on that note, a fan wanted to know if you finished your degree at Dartmouth.

WC: Yes.

MH: This past May, right?

WC: I walked in June.

MH: Do you plan on moving back to Florida, or are you going to continue living in New York City?

WC: I'm definitely going to continue to live in New York for a while. I need to be where the industry is.

MH: Apart from your spread in Plus Model Magazine, what else are you doing now?

WC: I'm modeling, working on my motivational speaking tour entitled "Embrace Yourself" (look out for me coming to a college near you in the Spring of '08), acting, and writing for a couple of magazines.

MH: What is your message to the girls of America who have big dreams of their own? What would you tell them?

WC: My life's motto...If someone tells you that you can't, prove them wrong and show the world that you can.

### **Study finds burning your food could cause some cancers**

Dutch scientists have said in a study that burning your food may lead to certain types of cancer, particularly in women. Scientists also say that more research is needed to make a definite

determination and that there are other factors that could be to blame.

"This new study supports our current advice, which already assumes that acrylamide has the potential to be a human carcinogen. Since acrylamide forms naturally in a wide variety of cooked foods, it is not possible to have a healthy, balanced diet that avoids it," said a Food Standards Agency spokesman.

According to the study, acrylamides, a chemical produced when cooking foods high in carbohydrates over 120 degrees Celsius (248 degrees Fahrenheit) in the frying, toasting and grilling processes, is a likely cause of some womb and ovarian cancers. Although it was found in 2002 that the chemical may be a cause of some cancers, the new study shows, for the first time, a link between the chemical in a human diet being a cause. To date, there is no evidence to suggest the chemical may cause breast cancer.

Scientists followed and monitored 120,000 people over an 11 year period, of whom 62,000 were women. Of the women, 300 ended up contracting ovarian cancer with 327 contracting womb cancer.

The study concluded that more than 40 micrograms of the chemical, or one bag of potato chips per day, is twice as likely to cause cancer in women.

"General advice, resulting from this project, is to avoid overcooking when baking, frying or toasting carbohydrate-rich foods," said a spokesman for the European Union.

### **Taiwanese consumer laptop market faces change following ASUStek winning sustainability award**

ASUS Eee PC, earlier launched world-wide for cost-saving and functionality factors, became a hot topic in 2007 Taipei IT Month. But the consumer market on laptop computer will be radically varied and changed after ASUS was awarded in the 2007 Taiwan Sustainable Award by Executive Yuan of the Republic of China.

Chairman of ASUS Jonney Shih said: "With this award, we [ASUS] are progressively approved by consumers with our quality and service," and stressed: "We'll have a great opportunity to look on bright factor on the Ratio of Sale on Eee PC world-wide including Taiwan."

Recently in fact, several laptop manufacturers launched multiple laptops not only low-price laptops but also others with Intel Centrino Duo or AMD Athlon 64x2 inside for different consuming population. And those manufacturers battled also on the high-definition AV market with theirs launch. No matter what their market battle will transform, the consumer will be the survivor and winner at this battle.

### **US Senate committee investigates credit card practices**

On Tuesday, the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations held a hearing titled "Credit Card Practices: Unfair Interest Rate Increases." The hearing examined the circumstances under which credit card issuers may increase the interest rates of cardholders who are in compliance with the terms

of their credit cards. It was a follow-up to a March 2007 hearing.

Subcommittee Chairman Carl Levin said in his opening statement: "Today's focus is on credit card issuers who hike the interest rates of cardholders who play by the rules — meaning those folks who pay on time, pay at least the minimum amount due, and wake up one day to find their interest rate has gone through the roof — again, not because they paid late or exceeded the credit limit, but because their credit card issuer decided they should be 'repriced'."

Present to testify on behalf of credit card issuers were Roger C. Hochschild of Discover Financial Services, Bruce L. Hammonds of Bank of America Corporation, and Ryan Schneider of Capital One Financial Corporation.

Much of the 90 minute hearing focused on specific cases where interest rates were raised, allegedly because credit scores of the debtor dropped, and not because they were delinquent or otherwise behind on payments. According to Levin, this practice made it so that almost all payments went towards finance charges with almost none toward repaying the principal. This, he felt, is an unfair practice, as the credit card companies were negligent in informing their customers of the rate hikes and the reason for such hikes.

"Families find themselves ensnared in a seemingly inescapable web of credit card debt." —Senator Norm Coleman

The collective credit card debt of Americans totals an estimated US \$900 billion. Issuers have come under pressure to disclose their

policies in regards to setting fees and interest rates. The US Truth in Lending Act requires that terms of a loan be set forth up front. Fluctuating interest rates on credit cards would, on the surface, appear to violate this act.

Roger C. Hochschild disagreed, arguing that "every card transaction is a new extension of credit ... This makes it difficult — and risky — to underwrite, and price, the loan based solely on the borrower's credit-worthiness at the time of application [for the card]."

Ryan Schneider, agreed: "The ability to modify the terms of a credit card agreement to accommodate changes over time to the economy or the credit-worthiness of consumers must be preserved."

"Attempts to interfere with the market here ... will inevitably result in less credit being offered," warned Bruce Hammonds. "Risk-based pricing has democratized access to credit," he added.

All three credit card executives also mentioned an ongoing Federal Reserve System review of credit card rules that already proposes a 45-day notification ahead of any rate changes.

Committee members criticized the industry for varying practices. Included in the criticism was the practice of mailing checks to cardholders, failing to notify applicants that obtaining additional cards could lower their credit score and raise their rates, and "ambushing" cardholders with raised rates.

Ranking minority member of the subcommittee, Norm Coleman said, "families find themselves ensnared in a seemingly inescapable web of credit card

debt. They particularly report being saddled with interest rates that skyrocketed on them seemingly out of the blue."

### **US military confirms authenticity of Standard Operating Procedures for Guantanamo Bay**

In an exclusive report, the United States military has confirmed to Wikinews, in an e-mail, the authenticity of the 2004 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Camp Delta at the U.S. Naval base in Guantánamo Bay, which was leaked by Wikileaks on December 3, and first reported on by Wikinews.

"The document appears to be a valid 2004 Camp Delta SOP," said Rick Haupt, Commander, United States Navy Director of Public Affairs, Joint Task Force (JTF), Guantanamo Bay.

"While the document is 'Unclassified,' it is designated 'For Official Use Only' and for many reasons (to include the safety and security of U.S. service members) was not intended for mass distribution," added Haupt.

The recent leak of the 2004 SOP states that some detainees may be punished for violating the rules of the camp. Despite recent claims of torture and extreme interrogation measures, Haupt states that all detainees are treated humanely and that most are providing information on terrorist activities.

"JTF Guantanamo policy is clear - we treat all detainees humanely. The JTF operates safe, humane and professional detention operations for unlawful enemy combatants. These enemy combatants are dangerous men and are providing valuable information in preventing further

terrorist attacks around the world," said Haupt.

Haupt also goes on to say that the manual changes when warranted, and that the changes in the SOP from 2003 are significant.

"It is important to understand that SOPs by definition, undergo periodic review and change as situations warrant. Detention operations at JTF-Guantanamo have evolved significantly since 2004, prompting many SOP changes. Additionally, there have been three changes in Command leadership since 2004; Maj. Gen. Hood, Rear Adm. Harris, and Rear Adm. Buzby," said Haupt.

Haupt declined to discuss the content or the changes of the SOP to Wikinews for reasons of security.

"As a general rule, for reasons of personnel safety and operational security, the U.S. military will not publicly discuss the specific contents of SOP's," added Haupt.

### **Today in History**

1768 – The first edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica was published.

1917 – Halifax Explosion: A ship in Halifax Harbour carrying trinitrotoluene (TNT) and picric acid caught fire after a collision with another ship and exploded, devastating Halifax, Canada.

1922 – The Irish Free State, the first independent Irish state to be recognised by the British, came into existence, one year to the day after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

1956 – The Blood in the Water match: At the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the Hungarian water polo team defeat the USSR, 4–0, against the background of the Hungarian Revolution.

1957 – Project Vanguard: An attempt to launch the first American satellite failed with an explosion on the launch pad at Cape Canaveral.

1989 – Twenty-five year-old Marc Lépine shot twenty-eight people at the École Polytechnique de Montréal in Montreal, Quebec, killing fourteen women before committing suicide.

2005 – Members of the People's Armed Police shot and killed several people during protests in in Dongzhou, a village in Shanwei prefecture-level city, Guangdong Province, China, that was organised in opposition to government plans to build a new power plant.

December 06 is Independence Day in Finland (1917), Constitution Day in Spain.

**Quote of the Day**

It is stern work, it is perilous work,  
to thrust your hand in the sun  
And pull out a spark of immortal  
flame to warm the hearts of men:  
But Prometheus, torn by the claws  
and beaks whose task is never  
done,  
Would be tortured another eternity  
to go stealing fire again.

~ Joyce Kilmer ~

**Word of the Day**

kick the bucket; v  
1. (idiomatic, euphemism) To die.

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