



Top Stories

Trade hall roof collapses in Poland

At least 20 people have died, and at least 80 were injured when a roof collapsed at a trade hall in Katowice, Poland. At least 100 are still feared to be trapped in the rubble.

Aboriginal Sovereignty Day Declared

Representatives of Australian Aboriginal Sovereign Nations at a gathering in Canberra, have declared that the 26th of January would be known as Aboriginal Sovereignty Day.

Featured story

Bloggers investigate social networking websites

An investigation into MySpace and Facebook, two new "social networking" sites of explosive popularity among teenagers and college students.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez threatens to jail all American spies
- The roof of an trade-exhibition hall in southern Poland collapses Saturday with several hundred people inside, trapping many beneath the wreckage.

Trade hall roof collapses in Poland

The roof of a trade hall in Katowice, Poland has collapsed. Officials said there are at least 26

fatalities and at least 100 people were sent to hospitals. More than 125 people are still believed to be trapped inside the building.

"Luckily nothing happened to me, but I saw a macabre scene, as people tried to break windows in order to get out. People were hitting the panes with chairs, but the windows were unbreakable. One of the panes finally broke, and they started to get out by the window," said survivor Franciszek Kowal.

Victims have been transported to hospitals in the mining area.

The trade hall was holding a pigeon exhibition and the collapse is believed to have been caused by large amounts of snow on the roof. At least 500 people were believed to be inside when the roof collapsed.

Jaroslaw Wojtasik a spokeman for the Katowice fire brigade said, "the weight of snow likely caused the roof to cave in at about 5:30 p.m., less than two hours before the event was scheduled to close for the evening."

A spokesman for the governor's office in the Silesia region, Krzysztof Mejer said, "we have 20 dead. Among them, unfortunately, there are probably children, I can't say how many."

"From our crisis centres, we have found there are about 20 fatalities. We don't know if foreigners are among them," said Andrzej Gaska,

spokesman for the regional police department.

Rescuers are concerned that people trapped may suffer due to the freezing temperatures (-15 degrees Celsius).

People standing outside the building were helping rescuers and those that were injured into emergency vehicles.

Australia's million-dollar-a-month Nauru detention centre for two refugees

The cost of maintaining the Australian Government's refugee detention centre on the tiny island republic of Nauru is now estimated at AUD\$1 million per month. The centre is currently home to just two Iraqi asylum seekers who were found to be refugees, but refused protection by Australian Immigration after receiving an adverse security assessment from the Australian security agency, ASIO.

Immigration officials say the Nauru camps are being maintained in a state of readiness, complete with dozens of staff, in case they are needed for future asylum-seekers. The "million dollar a month" figure is more than six times the official estimate given after the last big group of asylum seekers left the island late last year.

The group of 25 asylum seekers were accepted by Australia after nearly five years detained on the island. The decision to release the group followed a September visit

to Nauru by former immigration minister John Hodges with mental-health experts, who said that "the precarious mental health of many of the detainees required urgent attention." The delegates said some men were being constantly monitored for suicide risk or self-harm.

The last two asylum seekers on Nauru say they are hitting rock bottom - after their friends were granted refugee and humanitarian visas. Both men say they are beyond the point of despair, insisting that they cannot understand why they received adverse security assessments.

"Sometimes I feel that we are a piece of rubbish that everyone is trying to get rid of," Mohammed Sagar told Melbourne's Age newspaper. "We feel we are caught in the middle of a situation. It is too much to bear," said Mr Sagar, who insists neither he nor Mohammad Faisal are security risks.

"We strongly reject the finding and we believe it is unfair and unjustified. I have not said or done anything to cause harm in any way to an individual, let alone a whole country."

Mr Sagar said there was no longer an interpreter at the facility and this accentuated the men's problems. The pair are also concerned that they will lose other support, including access to a psychiatrist, when responsibility for the centre shifts from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to Australian and Nauru authorities in March.

"I feel I am very alone on this very tiny piece of land in the middle of the sea," Mohammed Sagar, 29, said in November. Mohammad

Faisal, 25, said: "My only option now is just to keep going with medication and sit alone inside my room and cry."

Faisal and Sagar say they had been accused of not being co-operative in interviews with an ASIO officer in January, a charge they emphatically denied. "I am wondering why those officers didn't mention earlier that I haven't been co-operative," wrote Sagar. "Why they waited four months to tell me this. I feel it is a psychological war. And they waited all this time just to put me under mental pressure."

They had reportedly made "anti-Western" and "anti-Australian" comments during an interview with ASIO officers.

"I've never expected that I would some day get such an accusation thrown on me, because it's terrible," said Mr Sagar. "I have never been in a police station, for a small fight even. How come to be a security threat for a whole country? It's terrible. I can't imagine it, even. I'm living in limbo. To think there is a possibility, even 1 per cent, to get a rejection, makes me feel very, very bad," he said.

Mr Faisal says he has a problem with his eyes which he believes could be treated in Australia. "I am enduring all this just to get freedom and be treated as a human being. If I didn't have a problem, I would go back (to Iraq) and would not endure this terrible situation here. I don't want human rights to be given to me. I want animal rights."

This week a DIMIA spokesman said "preliminary estimates" of the cost of maintaining the Nauru facilities in a contingency state

were "around \$1 million a month". The spokesman said the cost of maintaining the centre was not affected by the presence of the two men.

Australian Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett said the cost was absurd. He said it was crucial that the two men on Nauru not be forgotten: "They can't just be left in limbo."

Critics say there are no grounds for maintaining the facility, bearing in mind the Christmas Island immigration facility with a capacity for over 200 people — and is currently building a AUD\$300 million 800-bed centre there.

The Howard government has negotiated with Nauru and Papua New Guinea for the detention camps to remain in operation, and has indicated that it will re-activate the two camps if people smuggling resumes. Prime Minister John Howard hails the use of offshore detention as an "outstanding success"

Senator Bartlett said the pair should be allowed to appeal against the findings to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, like those who received adverse security clearances on Australian soil. "It's obviously not tenable to keep two people stuck on an island in the middle of the Pacific on their own," he said. Labor immigration spokesman Tony Burke said: "Nauru should be shut down. It's a waste of money, and it's appalling to leave these two languishing."

An Immigration Department spokesman said officials were working closely with the Nauruan Government "to find a resolution to the situation".

Mr Sagar said he had suffered

from depression and frustration over the past four years, but it was much harder now. "We had friends we could talk to to pass the time," he said. "Now I feel as if time has stopped." He expressed gratitude to Australians who had written letters of support.

Among those expressing concern is Mohammad al-Zirjawi, who was freed in August said, "they will go crazy in the camp alone." Mr Zirjawi suffers from depression, but says he is trying to make a fresh start.

Refugee advocate Marion Le says the ordeal has been a shockingly long period of detention for those on Nauru. She said, "it's been in my opinion an unmitigated disaster."

The Immigration Department said in November that the Government was working to resolve the cases of the two final Nauru asylum seekers.

Tunnel under U.S.-Mexico border trafficked in people, drugs

The combined efforts by agents from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Border Patrol have led to the discovery of a 2,400-foot (732 metre) tunnel between the United States and Mexico.

An investigation into a suspected drug smuggling operation in San Diego, California yielded tips which led to the discovery Tuesday by Mexican authorities of the nearly half mile long passage. The tunnel opens to the surface inside a small warehouse on the Mexican side of the border near the Tijuana airport. On the U.S. side, it surfaces inside a huge 48,222-square-foot (4480 m²) warehouse

at Otay Mesa, a town located near a border checkpoint in the Baja area of California.

Bales of marijuana weighing nearly 2-tons were seized by Mexican agents from that side of the tunnel, while U.S. agents confiscated 200 pounds (91Kg) at the other end. There are no reports of arrests.

On Wednesday, a second tunnel was discovered this month in the San Diego area when a U.S. Border Patrol vehicle got stuck in a sinkhole. The ground collapsed from the weight of the vehicle. The crude and shallow tunnel was found in an unfinished condition near the San Ysidro border crossing. It originated from a vacant lot in Tijuana, and is the 21st tunnel to be found over the last four years.

US 'Psychological Operations' comes home

U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged in a document called the "Information Operations Roadmap" that the Pentagon's information packages meant for foreign consumption are often "consumed by our domestic audience."

The National Security Archives, a private non-profit research group obtained the document through a Freedom of Information Act request and made it public.

"Secretary Rumsfeld's road map says the American people can't be protected from the Pentagon's psychological operations abroad but it doesn't matter as long as he's not targeting the American public. It's the collateral damage theory of propaganda," said the director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University, Thomas Blanton.

Lawrence Di Rita, pentagon spokesman said the Pentagon was not comfortable with propaganda "bleeding back" from overseas to the United States. "We're not OK with it," Di Rita said. "First of all, we're not lying. We're talking about truthful, accurate information, so that's baloney." Di Rita said.

The document said that "psyops," are restricted by policy and executive order from targeting US audiences, US military personnel and news agencies and outlets. "However, information intended for foreign audiences, including public diplomacy and PSYOP, increasingly is consumed by our domestic audience and vice-versa."

"Information Operations Roadmap" said in part: "The increasing ability of people in most parts of the globe to access international information sources makes targeting particular audiences more difficult. Today the distinction between foreign and domestic audiences becomes more a question of USG (U.S. government) intent rather than information dissemination practices."

Information used in psychological operations "will often be replayed by the news media for much larger audiences, including the American public...The likelihood that PSYOP messages will be replayed to a much broader audience, including the American public, requires specific boundaries be established," the document stated.

Anti-whaling Sea Shepherd crew detained in South Africa

After seven weeks in the Southern Ocean disrupting the Japanese whaling fleet, a Canadian registered anti-whaling ship, the

Farley Mowat, has been detained by South African authorities.

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society vessel, its captain Paul Watson, and his crew, have been detained indefinitely. The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) have placed a guard on the gangplank and are patrolling the ship.

Fifty days, 8,000 miles later – the Farley Mowat arrived in Cape Town on January 25, 2006

The Farley Mowat, which sailed from Melbourne, Australia on December 6, was detained in Cape Town harbour, following a request from the Canadian government. A SAMSA official said the ship did not have the required certification.

"They don't have the right certificates for the skipper, the first-mate or the chief engineer," an official said. According to SAMSA, the detention adheres to Canadian maritime laws and followed correspondence from Canada, who requested that the authorities check the ship.

According to Scoop Independent, the ship and crew have been detained due to the International Maritime Organization's ISPS Code. Under Canadian maritime law, both the captain and first officer should be Canadian nationals. Captain Paul Watson is Canadian, First Officer Alex Cornelissen is Dutch.

SAMSA claims that the Farley Mowat was not in possession of an international ship security certificate or a ship security plan.

This means the ship allegedly does not comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) - a

comprehensive set of measures to enhance the security of ships and port facilities. The code was developed in response to the perceived maritime threats to ships and port facilities in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the United States.

The official said the detention was in line with Canadian maritime laws and followed correspondence from Canada requesting the authorities check the ship.

However, Captain Paul Watson says political pressure from Japan is behind the detention of the boat. He says he does not have the necessary documentation required by officials as the boat is registered as a yacht and not a commercial vessel.

Japanese whalers are currently in the Antarctic catching whales for the Japanese Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR)'s JARPA II lethal research program - a practice condemned internationally by anti-whaling nations. After samples have been taken, the remaining whale meat is sold as a delicacy.

Crew of the Farley Mowat meets up with the Japanese whaling fleet

During the last six weeks in Antarctica, the Farley Mowat has intercepted the Japanese whaling fleet, chasing the whalers over 4,000 miles. Sea Shepherd say the whalers spent 15 days running from them, and that "no whales were killed as the fleet attempted to put as much distance between the whalers and whale defenders as possible."

During one confrontation the Farley Mowat crew claim it sideswiped the Japanese whaling fleet supply vessel Oriental Bluebird and ordered it to leave

from the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society say they will return to Antarctica in December 2006 with a faster long-range vessel. "We discovered that when we can catch them, we could stop their whaling activities. If we can secure a faster ship we will be able to shut them down completely. We will be making every effort to secure a faster ship so that we can return and intervene more effectively against their illegal killing operations," said Captain Paul Watson.

Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo councilor Dan Goodman say that Australia, New Zealand, and other anti-whaling nations should support Japan's commitment to its scientific research.

Japan announced at last year's meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) this summer its JARPA II program that includes the killing of 935 Minke whales and 10 endangered Fin whales.

In 2007-08, Japan will raise its self-imposed kill quotas to include 935 Minke whales, 50 fin whales, and 50 Humpbacks whales. Mr. Goodman said Japan had to kill the whales because certain kinds of data – including how old whale populations are, how old whales are when they reach sexual maturity, how long whales live for, and what they eat – cannot be obtained using non-lethal methods.

"These are the kinds of data required to improve management measures for the resumption of commercial whaling," Mr. Goodman said. "Of course the anti-whaling scientists don't

believe this kind of data is required because they do not want to see a resumption of commercial whaling."

Dr Gales, head of Australia's delegation to the scientific committee for the IWC, said after years of research the Japanese should have concluded by now that piked (minke) whales eat krill. "They're asking for support for science that has no support," he said.

Next year, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society say they intend to return to the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary in Antarctica to do some research of their own; "We need to research more effective law enforcement measures to shut down this criminal operation that is posing as a research project," said Captain Watson.

Dharam Singh steps down as Karnataka Chief Minister

Beleaguered Karnataka Chief Minister N. Dharam Singh, of the Congress (I) party, resigned on Saturday, in what appeared to be a bid to avert an imminent defeat on the floor of the house.

Singh's decision came after he was summoned by Governor T.N. Chaturvedi to discuss the constitutional deadlock arising out of his failure to take the trust vote in the assembly on Friday due to pandemonium that led to its indefinite adjournment.

"I have decided to resign after Governor T.N. Chaturvedi expressed his inability to convene the assembly again on technical grounds to enable me to move the trust vote," Singh told reporters. He said he had sent the resignation letter to the governor as he had no other option but to

quit.

Singh demitted office exactly 20 months after he was sworn in May 28 as chief minister.

The resignation is expected to lead to a coalition government of the Janata Dal-Secular and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to be led by the former's H.D. Kumaraswamy, son of former prime minister H.D. Deve Gowda.

This will be the first time the right wing party, BJP will taste power anywhere in southern India.

South Africa's Table Mountain ablaze

A large and dangerous fire has broken out on Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa.

Dry and windy conditions have swept the fire around the base of the mountain, pushing it towards the bordering suburbs in the City Bowl and Vredehoek area with furious flames reaching ten meters into the air. A number of houses along the border of the reserve are being threatened as the fire heads around the mountain from the cable car station towards the southern suburbs. Thick smoke and high winds are hindering fire-fighting efforts and causing havoc with the traffic around the area. Heynes helicopters, contracted to fight fires on the mountain, are assisting from the air. However since the main water reservoirs near the Vredehoek area are shrouded in smoke and water must be retrieved from the harbour instead.

So far one elderly woman has reportedly died due to smoke inhalation and many others may be at risk as they attempt to defend their homes. Firefighters have been attempting to bring the

situation under control throughout the night but the blaze continues unabated.

The cause of the fire is still uncertain. However a 36 year old British man has been placed under arrest for allegedly dropping a lit cigarette whilst on the mountain.

Fires in the area are an annual problem and may threaten to destroy the delicate indigenous fynbos ecosystem. Opinions about the effects of the fires on the mountain vary, however, with some specialists indicating that regular fires could cause permanent damage to the ecosystem whilst others believe that the fynbos is actually partially reliant on the heat of the fire to set off the shedding of seeds.

In previous years the area around Muizenberg and Fishhoek have been ravaged by fires of similar intensity. The scars of those fires still remain.

Manuel Zelaya sworn in as President of Honduras

Yesterday saw the inauguration of a new president of Honduras in Tegucigalpa, the nation's capitol. Manuel Zelaya, a former bank director and congressman, defeated National Party candidate Porifirio Lobo Sosa in a hotly contested presidential election in November 2005. His Liberal Party, however, still remains the de facto minority in Honduras, since the National Party shares an alliance with the Christian Democrats.

Zelaya replaces former President Ricardo Maduro, who served one term in office from 2002-2006. He inherits a nation that is dealing with serious issues concerning crime and poverty. Maduro established himself as a hardliner towards gang violence in

Honduras, most notably regarding the highly dangerous Mara Salvatrucha gang. While he did a great deal to crack down on violence in his term, he also drew sharp criticisms from human rights groups for his methods, which did not include the use of rehabilitation programs.

Zelaya and the Liberals promised such reforms, but he also promised to double the Honduran police force during his tenure, as well as create 400,000 jobs between now and 2010, when his term expires. He has also stated his support for a new free trade agreement with the United States, in addition to planning new policies to improve agriculture production, still the primary export of the Honduran economy.

Mr. Zelaya served as a national congressman from 1985 to 1998, and was instrumental in implementing the so-called "Open counties program" which increased decision-making powers of municipalities, a plan he says will grow further during his administration. He has been known as a wealthy landowner who carried himself with a sort of bravado both in Congress and on the campaign trail, often dressed in cowboy boots and Stetson hats. He has also worked in engineering, in addition to his successful careers in agriculture and politics.

Halonen and Niinistö neck-and-neck heading into Sunday's run-off election in Finland

The latest poll from Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat in co-operation with Gallup puts the two remaining candidates - incumbent president Tarja Halonen (Social Democratic Party) and former minister of finance Sauli Niinistö (Coalition Party) - in a

dead heat, heading into the second and final round of the Finnish presidential election on Sunday. 51% of the respondents supported Halonen, while 49% supported Niinistö. The result is within the margin of error at 3%.

Previous polls had given Halonen - who received about 46% of the votes in the first election nearly two weeks ago against runner-up Niinistö's 24% - a larger lead, though the movement is within the margin of error.

The Finnish presidential elections are completed in at most two rounds. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the first round, the two top candidates compete in a run-off election two weeks later.

Eastern Indonesia struck by earthquake

A major earthquake occurred at 1:58AM Saturday off the coast of Indonesia. It originated from the Banda Sea, roughly 195 kilometers from Ambon City. The earthquake measured 7.7 on the Richter Scale and occurred at a depth of about 341 kilometers said the U.S. Geological Survey.

The quake sent people running for their lives as fears mounted that the quake might have caused a massive tsunami.

But good news came as the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said in an e-mail advisory, "this earthquake is located outside the Pacific. No destructive tsunami threat exists in the Pacific Ocean or elsewhere based on historical earthquake and tsunami data."

No deaths or major injuries have been reported as of yet.

In December of 2004, a major

earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 struck just off the coast of Sumatra, triggering a major tsunami, killing nearly 300,000 people and leaving millions more homeless.

Earthquakes frequently take place in the area due to it being positioned on a volcanically active region referred to as the The Ring of Fire.

Bloggers investigate social networking websites

The humble beginnings of many popular Web services, such as Google, LiveJournal, and Yahoo!, are well-documented and available on their websites, and frequently recounted in news stories about the firms. These websites are also scrutinized for any perceived violations of users' privacy or other basic rights.

However, until recently no investigation had been done into MySpace and Facebook, two new "social networking" sites of explosive popularity among teenagers and college students. American bloggers, using Google and financial records, have begun investigations into the origins and policies of these sites, making some claims that the site owners explicitly deny.

Facebook

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, an individual web developer looking to make friends at Harvard University. Although Facebook has been sued by ConnectU.com for allegedly copying its concept and data, Facebook is actually the first worldwide college network on the Internet. As one of the most popular college websites, Facebook is notable for its lack of prominent advertising. It quickly accumulated \$50,000 in debt in 2004, and it

took nearly a year for it to begin turning a profit, so clearly it needed a large amount of venture capital.

In August 2005, independent blogger Josh Smith theorized that Facebook could actually be a data-gathering operation. He determined that Facebook received its initial funding from Peter Thiel, which he named as co-author of the book "The Diversity Myth", which argues that "multiculturalism" is used to promote social intolerance on American college campuses. Smith also found that Facebook also received \$13 million in funding from "Accel Partners", a firm whose manager James Breyer formerly served as the chairman of In-Q-Tel, a venture capital firm operated by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

However, both Accel Partners and Peter Thiel have invested in many dot-com companies. Peter Thiel is the co-founder of PayPal, and James Breyer has done extensive work in Silicon Valley. Investigating a firm's sources of venture capital has not often led to breakthrough exposes in the past.

More importantly, Smith discovered clauses in Facebook's current Privacy Policy which state that they "may share your information with third parties, including responsible companies with which we have a relationship". The Privacy Policy also warns that "Facebook also collects information about you from other sources, such as newspapers and instant messaging services. This information is gathered regardless of your use of the Web Site." Other bloggers have also called attention to this ambiguous

statement, which seems to point towards a Facebook conspiracy theory. User "tomd" at the Reddit news website noted that "these sites provide possibly the most accurate and easiest to use resource for mining information about groups of people."

According to Chris Hughes, spokesperson for Facebook, The clause you reference in the privacy agreement is leftover from an outdated version of the privacy policy which is currently being updated. We used to have a couple features on the site that aren't still there, such as collecting users' away messages from AIM (if they said they wanted it) and displaying mentions of their names in campus newspapers (again, upon request). That clause will not be included in the upcoming version of the privacy policy which will be released in the next couple of weeks.

The main issue surrounding Facebook is one of trust. Privacy advocates on the Web are always wary of any website that asks for detailed personal information, and Facebook takes this to the extreme by displaying entire social networks. However, most Facebook users seem to trust it deeply, providing full friends lists, phone numbers, and personal photo albums.

MySpace
Trent Lapinski, another blogger, began an investigation into MySpace in July 2005, when it was acquired by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, parent company of FOX News. MySpace does not often receive criticism about privacy issues, as its users typically do not give out last names or other personal information, but its company history is more interesting.

Lapinski was threatened with a lawsuit by MySpace's legal team when he let them know about his investigation, but on January 4, he decided to come forward with the details anyway.

MySpace expressed interest in commenting on this Wikinews article but did not respond by press time.

MySpace's CEO Chris DeWolfe and its most prominent spokesperson Tom Anderson first met in 1999 at Xdrive Technologies, a dot-com startup which gave away free storage space to Internet users. DeWolfe and Anderson went on to work together at ResponseBase, LLC., which was acquired by eUniverse, Inc., which later became Intermix Media. The relationship between these three companies is tangled indeed, and involves the MySpace name itself. According to Chris DeWolfe, "the general MySpace site" was launched in September 2003. Tom Anderson claims that "MySpace was a creative idea before it was a business." However, long before MySpace became a social networking website, the name MySpace and the domain myspace.com had been used by ResponseBase for their profitable newsletter about "Freebies, Deals, & Discounts", and a free disk space host similar to Xdrive. Newsgroup archives show multiple messages linking to copyrighted files hosted on MySpace. In 2001, MySpace's spokesperson was quoted in an article about "warez". The Internet Archive has backups of MySpace.com going back to 1999, but these cannot be accessed because MySpace's current owners have blocked the Internet Archive specifically from accessing the site.

One newsgroup message from

2001 documents the transition from MySpace to ResponseBase: Got more steaming piles of spam from "Media Now!" aka "responsebase.com". The specific username that the spams were sent to was only given to a specific company (freediskspace.com, later myspace.com) for their use only. Unfortunately they sold it, even though my business relationship with them ended in May 2001 when they discontinued the service I was using. Apparently they couldn't pay their bills and sold their list to spammers.

Actually, MySpace had simply shut down and become ResponseBase-- as evidenced by the "Freebies" newsletter above. ResponseBase also used a list of 8 million e-mail addresses purchased from Xdrive for their newsletters. In 2002, ResponseBase was booted from their ISP as an illicit spam organization-- with Tom Anderson himself listed as their billing contact. And later still, ResponseBase would be renamed to MySpace.

In 2002, DeWolfe went on to become a director of "Fog Cutter Capital Group", whose CEO, Andrew Wiederhorn, was convicted of income tax and pension felonies and sentenced to prison. Fog Cutter continued to pay Wiederhorn a salary of \$350,000 per month for 18 months while he sat in jail. Wiederhorn's wife, Tiffany Wiederhorn, is on the board of directors at MySpace's parent company Intermix Media.

Intermix Media itself has a tangled history. In 2004, Intermix (then operating as eUniverse) was named as a spammer organization on USENET. It purchased ResponseBase, shut down its operations, and reformed it as MySpace. On April 28, 2005,

Intermix was sued by the State of New York for installing malicious spyware over the Internet. According to their press release: The Attorney General documented at least ten separate web sites from which Intermix or its agents were downloading spyware, providing either no warning or other misleading disclosures. In this way, Intermix and its agents downloaded more than 3.7 million programs to New Yorkers alone, and tens of millions more to users across the nation. Intermix also went to great lengths to protect the spyware and adware it secretly installed. The programs were hidden in unlikely locations on the computer and could not be removed through a computer's "Add/Remove" function. In addition, the programs omitted "un-install" applications, and even reinstalled themselves after being deleted.

Just before the adware investigation was announced, Intermix's primary investors sold \$25,000,000 worth of Intermix stock at roughly \$8 per share. When the attorney general announced the investigation, Intermix stock fell to \$4 per share. Intermix's former CEO, Brad Greenspan, has accused Intermix investors of insider trading.

Soon afterwards, the spyware issue was settled out of court; Intermix paid \$7.5 million to the State of New York.

According to The Economist, "As an internet business, MySpace.com considers itself to be an entirely new breed ... The community has grown virally, with no advertising." However, this leaves one crucial question unanswered: without advertising, how did the site become popular in the first place?

Today in History

1845 - The Raven, a narrative poem by Edgar Allan Poe, was first published in the New York Evening Mirror.

1856 - The Victoria Cross was first awarded, recognizing acts of valour during the Crimean War.

1886 - Karl Benz received a patent for the first successful gasoline-driven automobile.

1959 - The Disney animated film Sleeping Beauty was first released.

2002 - In his State of the Union Address, U.S. President George W.

Bush described Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil".

January 29 is Chinese New Year's Day, Tết Nguyên Đán (2006)

Quote of the Day

"Sit down and put down everything that comes into your head and then you're a writer. But an author is one who can judge his own stuff's worth, without pity, and destroy most of it." ~ Colette

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