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JUST IMAGINE: RIDING THE 3-D 'METAVERSE'



Palm Beach homeowner John Testor's *Jester.com* is touted as 'the virtual living room of the future.' Testor and other entrepreneurs were in the spotlight at the Florida Venture Capital Conference. **Business, D1**

Daily News Photo by Jacob Gancarz

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THE WEATHER

Today will be mostly sunny and cool, according to the National Weather Service in Miami. Winds will be from the north at 5 to 10 mph. High temperatures will be in the lower to mid-60s, with lows in the upper 40s to lower 50s. Wind chills will be near 40 to mid-40s. Sunrise will be at 7:10 a.m., sunset at 5:34 p.m. At the Lake Worth Inlet, high tide will be at 6:15 a.m. and 6:12 p.m., and low tide will be at 12:01 a.m. and 4:35 p.m.

TO OUR READERS

Due to emergency technical problems, the continuation of some stories on Page D1 are not in the D section. They are on pages C8 and C9.

MUTT-ERFUL MAN

It's a dog's life, and a children's game offer, a loving look. **C4**

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BUSINESS

Sanchez & Maddux moves to Royal Palm

There appears to be no moss growing on the Sanchez & Maddux Inc. landscape architectural firm, which has pulled up stakes at 235 Peruvian Ave. and relocated itself at 140 Royal Palm Way.

"We were very lucky to be able to find an office condo space available. It gives us a little more square room," said design partner Jorge Sanchez. The nine-person firm had leased 1,100 square feet of space next to the House of Khan, and has expanded into 1,800 square feet.

Pan's Garden and Bradley Park show off the firm's work, as do the interior courtyards and gardens at the Norton Museum of Art. Sanchez said their primary work is private residences in the area, but they've expanded to include some commissions in Long Island, Dallas, Naples and the Bahamas.



Stephanie Murphy

Katz gems star-studded — If a fleet of Ferrari sports cars didn't rev your motor at Wednesday's kickoff party for the Cavalino Classic, try the sight of \$15 million in diamonds, rubies and sapphires at La Bella Meccina, hosted by Jet Aviation at the Palm Beach International Airport.

Beverly Hills jeweler Martin Katz Ltd. displayed gems from three of the designer's lines: vintage, classic and contemporary — all expensive and well-guarded. Accessories who favor Katz's work include Ashley Judd, who wore Katz's diamond earrings, bracelet and ring to last year's Academy Awards.

Besides the millions in cars and jewels — Chopra of Worth Avenue also showed some pricey timepieces — guests could sample delicacies by Palm Beach restaurants Amici Ristoranti, Lucio's and Galaxy Grille, while eyeing several million in private planes and vintage aircraft (including a P-51 fighter circa World War II, named Miss Stephanie), artwork by Guy Harvey and a 21-foot Riva boat.

Polo opener a winner

The opening day at play at Palm Beach Polo Club in Wellington was courtesy of The Related Group of Florida, developers of The Residences at CityPlace in West Palm Beach and St. Andrews at The Polo Club. Related Chairman Jorge Perez, who hosted a pregame reception, threw out the first ball to begin the season's first match. Perez also presented the Farm Vet team with the day's winning trophy.

Perez

Perez also presented the Farm Vet team with the day's winning trophy.

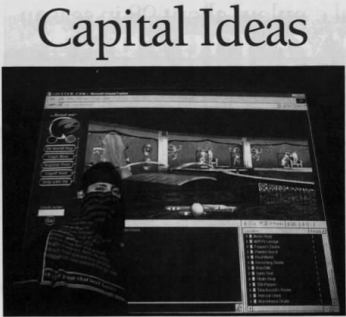
Play ball — The 2001 stock market, in light of pro-football athletes who have been packaged as "Playing to Win: From the Super Bowl to the Stock Market," set for 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday in the Governors Club at Phillips Point, 777 S. Flagler Drive.

Bob Christian, lead economist and chief investment officer of Wilmington Trust Corp., and Dick Vermell, former coach of the Philadelphia Eagles and the Super Bowl-winning St. Louis Rams, will team up for the presentation. They'll cover investment strategies, common financial mistakes when young people gain instant wealth, and successful wealth management plans for "the newly traditional and future wealthy."
For more information, call Michael Sherman at Wilmington Trust, (302) 651-8000.

Honoh at happy hour — The Business and Professions Division of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County will hold a networking happy hour at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at Gatsby's, 901 Village Blvd., West Palm Beach.

Admission is \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door, and includes one drink voucher, hors d'oeuvres, music and door prizes.
For information, call Tracy Kardash, 478-0790, Ext. 100.

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Daily News Photos by Josh Gortarc

Palm Beach homeowner John Textor shows on a large screen his Web site Jester.com, a virtual reality Web alternative. The screen shows a projection of the 3-D Wu Tang Clan Room, one of many different themed rooms for people to virtually walk through.

Far from foolish, Jester.com seeks investors for virtual Web

By STEPHANIE MURPHY
Daily News Business and Real Estate Writer

Twelve minutes of fame can crack the door on \$12 million or more of good fortune, as 28 promoters learned this week at the 10th annual Florida Venture Capital Conference.

Two things they learned Wednesday and Thursday at the Boca Raton Resort and Club are that venture capital is still plentiful, and investors aren't nearly as casual with their money as they were a year ago.

That thin threshold of time was kinder to some than others — depending on the contenders' verbal skills and slide-show sync. In a cut-to-the-chase mood, they targeted strength of management, core technology and business plans.

Palm Beach homeowner John Textor hopes he was able to turn a computer glitch into extemporaneous gold for JesterDigital Corp. Textor founded the company in 1996, he said, "to build an Internet that you can dive into instead of click through."

JesterDigital designs and pro-

We believe entertainment and technology are merging very fast. The Internet will be the battleground for a more kinetic-user experience; the most dynamic user experience on the Web of tomorrow is ready today.

JOHN TEXTOR
JesterDigital Corp.

duces Web-based virtual reality environments for digital media such as music, games, education and interactive advertising. The next-generation Internet application also has multi-user accessibility. Opting not to rely on the limitations of a Power Point illustration to demonstrate such sophisticated Web territory, Textor resorted to verbal articulation while the forum staff and his own presentation

coordinator reconnoitered to the Jester.com Web site.

His 12 minutes were ticking by, but by the time images of the Egyptian pyramids flashed onto giant video screens to illustrate Textor's point on "e-learning" potential, he had given a brief but humor-dotted summary of why he's fishing for \$10 million to \$20 million in first-round financing for JesterDigital.

Textor, 35, is co-founder and president of Wyndcrest Partners, a holding company based in downtown West Palm Beach that acquires and invests in private companies with technology that is significant to the evolution of the Internet. He's also a director of Palm Beach Gardens-based Virtual Bank.com, recently voted "best online bank" by SmartMoney magazine in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Filmmaker Michael Bay — *Dinsey's The Rock*, *Armageddon* and upcoming *Pearl Harbor* — was Textor's room roommate and is a partner in Wyndcrest, along with investor Jeff Kukus of

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Venture capital said harder to obtain

By STEPHANIE MURPHY
Daily News Business and Real Estate Writer

The footnote of the Florida Venture Forum's 10th annual conference on venture capital is the tighter grip on purse strings, said board member Jonathan Cole.

"The event reflects the difficulties in the funding marketplace of the last nine months," said Cole of Palm Beach, a partner with the law firm of Edwards & Angell, where he heads the Venture Capital and Emerging Company Group. "It's a lot harder to raise money than it was. It's not totally tied to the public marketplace; it's actually a little counter-cyclical. If it's easy to go public, [candidates] go around the venture market. Typically, there's more opportunity for the private equity investor."

The Miami-based group gathered at the Biltmore in Coral Gables in past years but moved the 2001 event to the Boca Raton Resort and Club to have more room for meetings held Wednesday and Thursday.

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Jonathan Cole, a board member of the Florida Venture Forum, said it is becoming difficult to raise money but there is still opportunities available.

Gail Liberman

New rules on IRAs are easier to follow

Good news. New rules from the U.S. Treasury Department — effective immediately — make it easier for us to take money out of our IRAs and let more of it grow tax-deferred.

It's about time!

One major downside of IRAs is that you must start making withdrawals or "distributions" at age 70½ — even though you'd probably prefer to keep the money in the IRA growing tax-deferred. Even worse, you must calculate how much to withdraw from a selection of ridiculously complex formulas, based on life expectancy.

Now, you can convert to a single formula for IRA withdrawals. The new formula, aimed at simplifying confusing IRA distribution rules, is favorable to most people, so it's worth looking into.

Also under the new rules, you no longer need to designate a beneficiary when you turn 70½. And you can change the beneficiary with no negative consequences.

The new regulations apply not only to IRAs but also to most other retirement plans, including 401(k)s and 403(b) annuity contracts.

Although many professionals still are deciphering all this, the initial word is that the rules make life dramatically easier for heirs of IRAs. If you're retirement plan beneficiary currently in a tax trap that requires you to withdraw the entire balance by the year after a person's death, the rules spell immediate relief. You can spread out those taxable distributions.

"Review the rules, and consult with a professional," advised Gary H. Schatzky, a New York City attorney and chairman of the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors. "This is a tremendous benefit for just about anyone who has an IRA — unless they've previously been violating the law."

"It affects all retirees," said Palm Beach attorney Thomas N. Silverman. "It's going to be using one mortality table."

Schatzky says the changes should let more people keep more money tax-deferred. The exception is if your spouse happens to be greater than 10 years younger than you. In that case, he said, the distribution you're allowed to take

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Wireless: The 'Net's future — with no strings attached

By MICHAEL KANELL
Palm Beach Daily News Columnist

Like Bullwinkle the Moose, forever sticking a massive mitt into his top hat, the wireless companies repeatedly convinced themselves they were about to produce a rabbit.

In this case, the rabbit is demand for the wireless Web — connections to the Internet by phone, pager and personal digital assistant. The companies have touted their new features, confi-

dent that a huge market would exist. But they've been disappointed.

So far, Maybe this is the year the hype will be woven to match reality — then again, maybe reality will have to adjust itself a bit.

For many months, the buzz about The Net in Your Hand — from analysts, companies and media alike — easily could have led you to believe the Internet connection you've experienced from desktop computers would soon be in your hands.

Through personal digital as-

It may be a tough sell. Right now only a fraction of the people who own phones with Internet access have activated the service.

sistants such as the Palm, through pagers, through laptops using wireless modems and mainly through cellular phones — the Wireless Web was soon to

be everywhere, all the time. But there was a disconnect. It didn't happen.

Consumers by the tens of millions have been contentedly avoiding the Wireless Web. Oh, they are happy to wear, carry and use wireless devices. According to surveys by the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, more than 100 million people have wireless phones — and an estimated 40 million of them came with messaging capability. But fewer than 5 million have Internet access through a technology known as wireless ac-

cess protocol, or WAP.

Some call it WAP or Wap-shall. But only a fraction of the people who own those phones have activated the service.

Talk about the future, and wireless advocates will launch lofty predictions about video in your hand, seamless Web surfing, the chance to walk through a mall and be bombarded by offers from each store you pass.

For better or worse, we're not there yet.

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