

EBay awash in war-related items, but bidder beware

by Matt Campbell
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Forget gnomes. Instead, picture Saddam Hussein's head in your garden.

A posting Friday on the eBay Internet auction site professed to offer the head from the 40-foot statue that was pulled from its pedestal by joyous crowds last week in Baghdad, Iraq.

"Get a piece of history by buying Saddam's giant head," wrote the seller, identified only as "freedomfighter" of Clearwater, Fla.

Bidding was up to nearly \$1 billion by mid-day Friday—an indication would-be buyers were taking this about as seriously as the seller, who turned out to be a radio host in Tampa, Fla.

He also was selling office chairs, purportedly from Iraqi government offices, and even Saddam's presidential yacht, the Mansur.

"This vessel was recently blasted by U.S. bombs (16 laser-guided 500-pound bombs to be exact) BUT is still in good condition," the eBay posting says.

On Friday the number of real or manufactured Saddam-related items for sale on eBay hovered around 1,500.

The most common authentic items are bank notes with pictures of Saddam. Posters and stamps also are available. Much of the material dates to the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The site also is awash with Western-made kitsch:

-Decals selling for \$4 depicting comic-strip character Calvin urinating on Saddam's head.

-For \$4, a Saddam key chain with a U.S. fighter jet attached.

-For \$15, a Saddam voodoo doll (complete with pins).

-A wristwatch with Saddam's face is accompanied by the words: "His head on a platter, where it belongs."

The postings read like the ads in the back of an old comic book: Saddam "hunting permits"; anti-Saddam T-shirts; a Saddam pocket compass; toilet paper imprinted with Saddam's face; Saddam "dope-on-a-rope" for the shower; Saddam golf balls; a Saddam mask; and Saddam mouse pads, dart boards and wanted posters.

Novelties aside, looting remained a serious problem Friday in Iraq as people reportedly were stealing from banks, hospitals, colleges and government offices. There also was a report that the national museum in Baghdad, which contains priceless antiquities, was breached.

Assyrian and Babylonian artifacts, however, are more likely to arrive on the black market than on eBay.

Still want that giant head or Saddam's yacht? Bidding will be open until April 18. But before you get carried away, read the fine print: "Buyer pays for all shipping costs."

Middle school shooting ends in deaths of principal, student

by Amy Worden and Nancy Peterson
Knight Ridder Newspapers

By 7:30 a.m. Thursday, the packed cafeteria at the Red Lion Area Middle School was noisy, bustling and brimming with adolescent energy. As always.

Several hundred eighth-graders - most of the class - congregated there, as they always did before classes started. Weaving in and out of the students gathered at the tables was the affable principal, Eugene Segro, greeting the kids by name, like he always did.

Then came the unexpected: Eighth-grader James Sheets, wearing a black overcoat, stood up, pulled out a handgun and fired a single shot into Segro's chest.

For a moment the several hundred students in the crowded room sat in shocked silence, trying to figure out what had just happened. Then someone yelled, "He's got a gun." Some terrified students dove under tables and others fled toward the doors.

Angel Williams, 14, was sliding along the wall heading toward the exit when she saw Sheets point a gun to his head and pull the trigger.

"I saw him shoot himself in the head and fall to the ground," said Williams, holding her index finger and thumb at her ear. "The look on his face was horrible."

Sheets, 14, of Red Lion, died at the scene of a single gunshot wound. Segro, 51, of York, was pronounced dead at York Hospital.

Red Lion Borough Police Chief Walt Hughes said Sheets entered the school armed with at least three handguns that he had carried in his book bag.

Hughes said he learned from Sheets' parents that the boy had somehow gotten the key to his parents locked gun safe and took three revolvers. The principal was killed with a .44-caliber weapon, while the student was believed to have been killed with a .22-caliber weapon, York County Coroner Barry Bloss said.

Hughes said he did not yet know of no motive for the killing, which occurred at 7:38 a.m.

Some said Sheets had been angry about something and had threatened to kill himself and Segro on several occasions, including the night before the shooting.

"The night before he called friends and said he was angry and would kill the principal

and himself," said Williams. "He'd said it before but nobody did anything because he didn't actually do it."

At a press conference late yesterday, after interviewing 100 people, Hughes said the shooting may have been an attention-seeking stunt gone awry.

"If you were trying to impress somebody it may go further than you planned," he said. "Sometimes they surprise themselves with the outcome."

Hughes said Sheets may have had a girlfriend, but was not sure if the relationship was a factor in the shooting.

pal who reached out to all students.

"He cared about the kids, it was more than a job for him," said Nicole Wisor, 16 who once attended the middle school. "He tried to keep kids out of trouble. He kept me out of trouble."

By early afternoon shaken students and angry parents began streaming into the high school seeking counseling and information about the incident. Another counseling session was held Thursday night at the school, which will be closed Friday.

"The school district is grieving the loss of our beloved principal and the student," said Larry Macaluso, district superintendent.

Parents said their children told them the three teachers in the cafeteria at the time fled after the first shot.

"My worst nightmare has come true," said Tammy Williams, mother of Angel Williams and 15-year old Christy, who also witnessed the shooting. "The kids could not get out and there was no

"I saw him shoot himself in the head and fall to the ground...the look on his face was horrible."

-Angel Williams, 14, on witnessing her classmate's suicide, after shooting and killing Red Lion Area Middle School principal Eugene Segro

"We have a lot more questioning to do to get facts we don't have," he said.

Autopsies were being conducted on both victims Thursday. Bloss said a third shot was fired, but apparently hit the floor.

Classmates described Sheets, known by friends as "Jimmy," as someone who got along with everyone and played on the school football team.

"He was nice and was friendly with lots of different kids," said Alisha Stambaugh, 14, who sat next to Sheets in science class.

Sheets lived with his mother and stepfather, Arthur Baker, in a well-tended split-level house, outside the borough.

Asked what Sheets was like, a group of distraught neighbors consoling each other in the yard next door said only: "He was a good kid."

Segro, who officials say was married and had children, lived in an older community in south York.

No one was home at Segro's tan, split-level home. A red Honda was parked in the driveway. Several bird feeders hung in the backyard and the flowerbeds were freshly mulched. Neighbors shooed away a reporter, saying they were told not to speak to the media.

Segro came to the school in 1988 as an assistant principal and was promoted to principal in 1997. He was remembered by students, parents and other administrators as a princi-

one to lead them out or talk the boy down."

The school district had only recently received a grant to hire a security officer for Red Lion's junior and senior high schools, but he was at the neighboring high school at the time of the shooting.

Gov. Edward Rendell called it a "regrettable and tragic incident."

A spokesman for Vicki Phillips, the state secretary of education, said the state will work with the district to determine what went wrong. But she stressed that school violence has decreased statewide, as it has across the nation.

"We could put metal detectors on every street leading up to the school and something could still happen," said Keith Pierce, press secretary for Phillips.

Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center, said yesterday that "despite the public's perception, schools continue to be one of the safest places for young people to be - even if it's difficult for that message to resonate in Red Lion today."

Data from the center show 56 violent deaths in or near schools in the 1992-93 year compared with just three across the nation in 2002-03, until yesterday.

"I don't want to minimize the importance of any single life," Stephens said. "However, when you look at the numbers, there are very few instances of violence in schools."

Seton Hall put on alert for SARS

by Bob Groves
The Record

Seton Hall University put its campus on alert Tuesday for severe acute respiratory syndrome after learning that one of its students may have had the illness, health officials said.

The student, along with a 68-year-old woman, were the state's fourth and fifth suspected cases of SARS, a mysterious, sometimes fatal respiratory illness that originated in China last fall, according to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

Both patients, who were unidentified, have completely recovered, state officials said.

The woman traveled to Asia March 14, developed a cough on March 23, and a fever on March 25, state officials said. The woman was hospitalized overnight in China and was released the next day when her fever was gone. Her cough subsided on March 30, and she returned to New Jersey on April 11.

The student is one of the few U.S. cases of secondary transmission-someone who caught the disease here, instead of Asia.

The student had symptoms of a respiratory illness before being visited in a dormitory for a couple of hours April 5 by a relative later diagnosed with SARS, according to an e-mail sent to Seton Hall staff and students by Eddy A. Bresnitz, the state epidemiologist. The student developed a fever and worsening symptoms after the exposure, but was not hospitalized and is doing well.

"It is unclear whether the Seton Hall student actually had SARS, and it is unlikely that anyone other than the student's roommates had the level of contact with the student sufficient to acquire SARS," Bresnitz wrote. "The potential for transmission to anyone on campus is very low."

No one has gone to the student health center complaining of any symptoms, Seton Hall spokeswoman Jennifer Hopek said.

Classes at Seton Hall resumed Tuesday after the holiday weekend. Students interviewed Tuesday afternoon said the e-mail had not yet generated much anxiety, although there was some wishful joking about classes being canceled.

"Some kids run out of here when it snows," said Pete Murphy, a sophomore from Boonton, N.J.

Still, Murphy said he would like to know which dormitory the student lives in, "so we can take precautionary measures."

Manesh Dadlani, a sophomore from Paramus, N.J., said he has doubts that Seton Hall would have only one case of SARS.

"It's only one person, but it spreads so quickly," he said.

State health officials and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told staff and students that any person who was on campus between April 5 and April 15 and who developed or develops SARS symptoms between April 6 and Saturday should report to the university's student

SARS, a viral lung disease

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) appeared in China last fall and spread quickly to dozens of nations, but only a few thousand people have it, and most infected people recover fully.

What it is

- A type of coronavirus
- Causes the same colds in humans, serious diseases in animals
- Symptoms appear 2 to 7 days after infection
- Person with symptoms can spread virus through saliva, mucus, other body fluids
- If you have symptoms, see a doctor

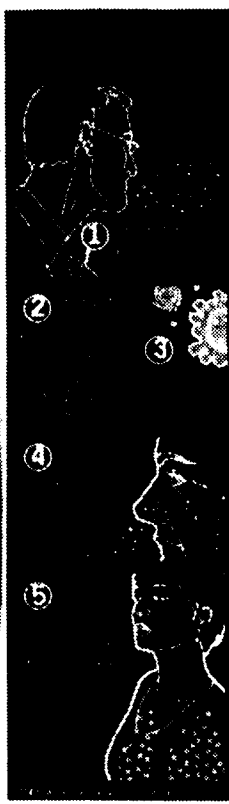
Symptoms

- 100-101°F (38-38.3°C) Fever
- Dry cough
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches, fatigue, headache

Transmission

- Antibiotics won't help
- Antibiotics won't help SARS virus but help bacteria from blocking lungs
- In first cases reported:
- 4% death rate
- 10% to 20% required mechanical breathing assistance

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SARS U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • Graphic: Lee Hwang



cases of SARS—a 100.4-degree fever and other symptoms—and probable cases, defined as having SARS symptoms and X-ray or autopsy evidence of pneumonia or respiratory distress.

The first New Jersey resident with suspected SARS—later determined to have probable SARS—is fully recovered. The second is recovering at home. The third was discharged from a Pennsylvania hospital and was diagnosed with another illness; doctors are awaiting tests to rule out SARS. Most of the suspected cases of SARS may turn out to be other viral respiratory infections, Bresnitz said.

The three previous New Jersey people with SARS had traveled to Asia, and there have been no reported cases of SARS transmission to people who had contact with them.

SARS is believed to be an airborne illness. The primary means of transmission is close, person-to-person contact.

SARS is also believed caused by a coronavirus responsible for some common colds. SARS first appeared in the southern China province of Guangdong in November, and had spread to Hong Kong by February. To date, the World Health Organization has reported 3,947 probable SARS cases in 27 countries, including 229 deaths. The largest numbers of cases have been in China.

The CDC has reported 190 suspected SARS cases, and 38 probable cases in 35 of the United States. There have been no SARS deaths in the United States.

health services or their own doctor.

Symptoms include a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, and any of the following: a dry cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, or headache.

The CDC distinguishes between suspected