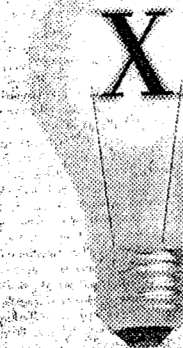


INSIDE
MONDAY

Washington Business

IT'S THEIR BUSINESS



Generation Xers at starting companies in record numbers.

SPIRITUAL LINKS

Michael Murphy, the New Age master of sports weirdness, writes of golf, a coming higher consciousness among earthlings, and more golf in his new novel, "The Kingdom of Shivas Irons."

STYLE, Page C1



A/NATION

■ **DEA AGENT'S SLAYING**

A DEA agent charged in the slaying of a fellow agent may have made earlier threats to kill the victim. Page A7

■ **HOLIDAY IN BOSNIA**

President Clinton headed for holiday meal with troops days after saying he wants them to stay indefinitely. Page A28

■ **THE FEDERAL PAGE**

The private company that runs NASA's space shuttle program may have to cut 250 to 300 jobs nationwide. Page A25

A18/WORLD

■ **JAMAICAN VOTE**

Jamaica's election last week was the least violent in years, and many hope it's a harbinger. Page A18

■ **TENSION IN INDIA**

If a Hindu nationalist party wins India's upcoming election, some fear communal tension. Page A19

■ **MISSING THE BOOM**

Israel's economic boom in the early '90s bypassed immigrant "development towns." Page A23

OPINION

■ **EDITORIALS/LETTERS/OP-ED**

William Raspberry, Richard Harwood, Fred Hiatt, David Cole, Evans and Novak. Pages A26-27

THE WEEK AHEAD

■ **Today: Washington Business;** taking a holiday this week are Health, Food, Home and, next Sunday, the Washington Post Magazine. Friday, Weekend; Saturday, Real Estate.

B/METRO

■ **CELL PHONE THEFTS**

Police say cellular telephones have become prime targets for thieves in the Washington area. Page B1

■ **BARRY SECURITY TEAM**

D.C. police may eliminate the security detail assigned to Mayor Barry's wife as soon as today, sources said. Page B1

■ **SEEKING SUBURBAN HOMES**

The United States is funding a program to link Baltimore's black foster care children with suburban adoptive families. Page B1

■ **'UNDERGROUND ZOO'**

A Virginia snakebite victim is part of an "underground zoo" that includes snake breeders nationwide. Page B1

C/STYLE

■ **CORPORATE CHEER**

The traditional office holiday party has snowballed into a high-profile and elaborately detailed affair. Page C1

■ **STILL AFLOAT**

The \$200 million "Titanic" earned \$27.6 million in its opening weekend, much to the relief of studio executives. Page C1

■ **STYLE PLUS**

Vexations drafts a plan for the small depositor in the age of big banks, plus Oh, Man! on spending Christmas alone. Page C5

D/SPORTS

■ **COLLEGES/A Point to Make**

Maryland is trying fifth-year senior Matt Kovarik at point guard in place of former starter Terrell Stokes. Page D3

■ **BASKETBALL/The Middle Man**

The Wizards are realizing how important center Terry Davis, hobbled by an Achilles' injury, is to them. Page D6

■ **HOCKEY/A Day of Rest**

Coach Ron Wilson gave the Capitals a day off before Saturday's game against Carolina—and it paid off. Page D13

SCIENCE
NOTEBOOK

Archaeology: Going the Distance for Frankincense

Frankincense and myrrh, reportedly among the first Christmas presents, were probably costly luxury imports in the ancient Middle East.

The earliest physical evidence of incense burning comes from Egypt at about 2500 B.C., around the time of Cheops and the Great Pyramid, in the form of "spoon-shaped" burners, according to a report in the Dec. 18/25 issue of the journal Nature.

Archaeologists have assumed that the fragrant gums used in religious and burial ceremonies were obtained from resinous shrubs and trees of the Bursera family, just as they are now. But the nearest known sources of such plants are in Ethiopia, southern Arabia and Somalia.

So what were Egyptians and their

neighbors burning? Nobody knew for sure because the few specimens collected from ancient sites apparently have not been analyzed extensively.

Until now: A team of British scientists examined a sample of incense from the cellar of a house in what was then Egyptian Nubia dating from 400 to 500 A.D. Gas chromatography and mass spectrometry confirmed it contained the components present in modern frankincense.

Then, as now, presumably, the aromatic resin was obtained from the whitish sap of trees of the genus *Boswellia*, the nearest of which would have been hundreds of miles away. The frankincense may have found its way to Nubia by sea or overland caravan.

—Curt Suplee

Toxicology: Pfiesteria's Neurological Effects

Fishermen and swimmers who ventured into the water during this summer's outbreaks of the fish-killing microbe *Pfiesteria piscicida* in Chesapeake Bay tributaries reported a loss of memory and other symptoms that sometimes lasted for weeks.

Now a study is adding credence to reports that the symptoms were caused by mind-altering neurotoxins produced by the organism. Researchers at Duke University have documented significant neurological impairment in rats exposed to pfiesteria's toxins in the laboratory.

Edward Levin, director of Duke's Integrated Toxicology Program, injected rats with pfiesteria cells and then ran them through a series of mazes. In test after test, the rats exposed to the toxins were

"significantly retarded in their learning," compared with rats that weren't exposed, Levin says. The affected rats had trouble mastering new tasks and were slow to adapt to new surroundings.

Pfiesteria was identified 10 years ago and associated with fish kills in North Carolina's coastal estuaries. This summer, the microbe was linked to dead and dying fish in Chesapeake Bay tributaries, prompting closure of several Maryland waterways.

While preliminary results from the experiment were reported in the popular media, the Duke study is the first to document pfiesteria's neurological effects in a controlled experiment in a peer-reviewed scientific journal—the December issue of Environmental Health Perspectives.

—Joby Warrick

Neuroscience: Short-Term Memory and Perception

Scientists have produced new evidence that our memories can influence our perceptions of the present.

Previous research has shown that if someone imagines an object in their "mind's eye," they are more likely to be able to recognize a similar object in real life. For example, people looking for someone in a crowd often imagine that person's face to help locate them.

In the new research, Alunit Ishai of the National Institutes of Health and Dov Sagi of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel tried to determine whether it makes a difference if that mental image is drawn from short-term or long-term memory.

Volunteers looked at points of lights on a

computer screen. When they imagined a pattern of lights they had been shown earlier, they were better at locating a very faint light.

The experiments provide "psychophysical" evidence that perception and imagery use similar pathways in the brain, the researchers write in the current issue of the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience.

The volunteers' accuracy, however, decreased the longer they waited after seeing the pattern. That supports the idea, the researchers say, that short- and long-term memories work by different pathways in the brain, and it's short-term memory that plays the most important role in perception.

—Rob Stein

■ BOOK WORLD C2
■ CLASSIFIED D16
■ COMICS D25-D27

■ CROSSWORD D27
■ FEDERAL DIARY B2
■ HOROSCOPE D25

■ ANN LANDERS D25
■ MOVIE DIRECTORY C8
■ NAMES & FACES C3

■ OBITUARIES B6-7
■ TELEVISION C4
■ WEATHER B2