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STEVE LOPEZ
POINTS WEST

Care Is Still the Pits at Money Pit King/Drew

Whether you live in Watts, Beverly Hills or the Antelope Valley, the chronic failure of Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center is costing you a fortune.

For decades, hapless Los Angeles County officials have thrown hundreds of millions of dollars at the second-rate hospital, trying to bring it up to snuff. And yet the results are always disastrous, up to and including last week's notice that King/Drew had flunked an inspection by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and will lose \$200 million a year in federal funds.

So what else is new?

What follows here is just a partial tally of the recent drain on the county treasury:

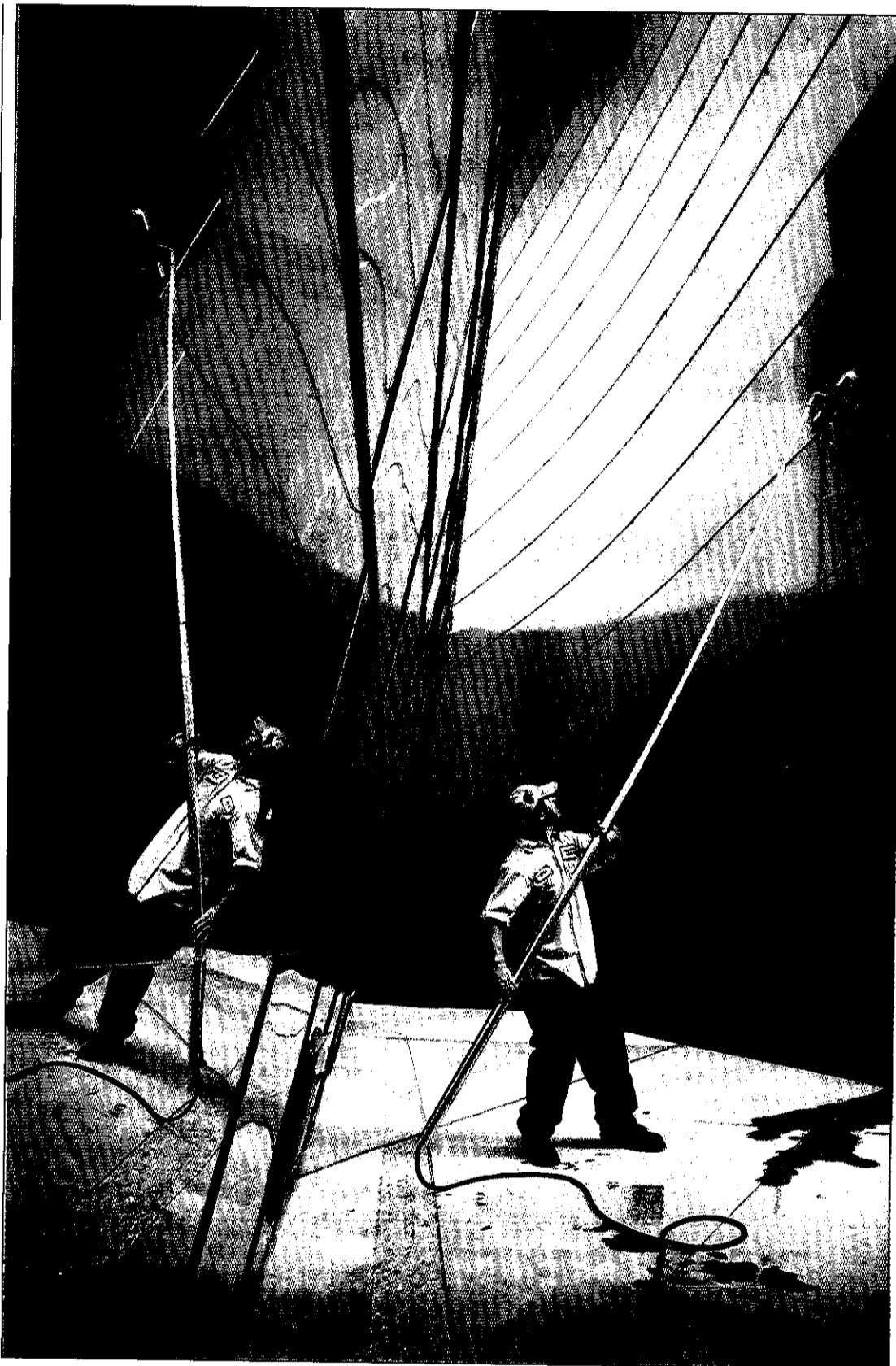
In 2004, things got so dreadfully bad the county turned the hospital near Watts over to consultants and paid them more than \$17 million for 18 months of work, only to have L.A. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich call the firm's performance a "dismal failure."

Between 1999 and 2003, the county spent \$20.1 million on malpractice payouts to King/Drew patients.

When the cardiac monitoring ward was closed in 2003 because of a third questionable death, the county hired a consulting firm and paid it roughly \$1 million.

Last year, the county allocated \$63.8 million for infrastructure improvements and refurbishing of operating rooms and psychiatric wards, bringing us to last week's notice that the hospital has failed to meet minimum standards in nine of 23 areas.

In short, the place is a sink-hole for your money. And although there have no doubt always been good and dedicated



Let It Shine, Let It Shine

Elmer Paiz uses a special extension wand to clean Walt Disney Concert Hall in preparation for the opening of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's season Thursday. Forty-five percent of the building is cleaned by workers on a scaffold, the remaining 55% by hand with the wand. Ionized water is used.

AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

Sparring Over Lethal Injection

At a hearing on how California inmates are executed, an anesthesia expert says they might awaken during the process and die in pain.

By HENRY WEINSTEIN
AND MAURA DOLAN
Times Staff Writers

SAN JOSE — During the first day of a trial on the constitutionality of California's lethal injection method of execution, an expert on pharmacology said the drug used to anesthetize inmates wears off "extremely fast" and potentially exposes prisoners to painful deaths.

"There is a possibility that inmates could emerge [from unconsciousness] and experience a painful execution," Dr. William Ebling, who has done extensive research on anesthetics, testified Tuesday in a San Jose federal courtroom.

He called California's execution procedure a "one-size-fits-all" plan that ignores the fact that drug dosages must be adjusted to a person's size, health history and other factors.

Ebling was among several witnesses — including several who had viewed executions — to portray lethal injection as fraught with uncertainty, a process that appears to render some prisoners clearly unconscious before death while others heave and convulse in what looks like agony.

The four-day trial here is one of several court proceedings around the nation in which lethal injection is under challenge as a violation of the U.S. Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Executions have

Senior Assistant Attorney General Dane Gillette, lead state, said his side would state that a new California adoption of questions about a cocktail — requiring a continuous infusion of more than a one-time injection would meet standards. Gillette would not concede the former procedure was optional but acknowledged in the execution of Stanley Tookie Williams, a leader and murderer. In that case, the team failed to include a line for the anesthesia that Morales' lawyer in a deposition.

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Erratic Driving by We Is Deta

The man accused of killing 10 at a market drove earlier, a witness

By JOHN SPANO
Times Staff Writer

Hours before dozens of pedestrians market, George Miller drove erratically down the street, switching