

LOCAL & STATE, B1

Memorializing a peace pact

RELIGION, D1

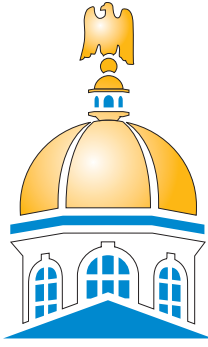
Car-roof menorahs mark season



NATION & WORLD, A2

The army of tomorrow?

CONCORD



MONITOR

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2007

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CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

50¢



Brian Thone waits his turn while Rich St. Pierre takes Elijah's photo during their visit to Carolynne St. Pierre's grave at Blossom Hill Cemetery in Concord on Mother's Day. Rich had propped up a photo album that had her picture on the cover alongside a vase of pink roses.

CONCORD

Arrest threatens home aid

Mom cut off after
police arrest her son

By ANNMARIE TIMMINS
Monitor staff

A single mother of three lost her Section 8 housing assistance after her 17-year-old son's drug possession arrest appeared in the *Monitor's* police log, according to a lawsuit filed in federal court this week.

The Concord Housing Authority notified Kelley Nault of Oak Street in September that it was terminating her federal housing assistance Dec. 1 because of her son's August arrest. Joseph Nault III was charged with two counts of drug possession on Aug. 7 after the Concord police determined he had marijuana and Percocet, according to a police report. He has not yet gone to trial on the charges.

Federal rules permit the termination of housing assistance if any member of the household engages in illegal drug or violent activity, even if there is no arrest or conviction.

The housing authority follows federal rules that permit the termination of housing assistance if any member of the household engages in illegal drug or violent activity, even if there is no arrest or conviction. The rule applies even if the drug activity occurs outside the home.

But there are two problems with this case, according to Nault's lawyer, Michael Perez of New Hampshire Legal Assistance. He says the housing authority needed more evidence than a newspaper police log, and it had to let Kelley Nault question the arresting officer or challenge the other evidence before revoking her assistance.

"The only evidence of disqualifying conduct . . . was 30 words from the *Concord Monitor* police log indicating that Joey had been arrested," Perez wrote in the lawsuit.

Nault unsuccessfully

See HOUSING - A8

'Now, we're four'

Since his wife's death in February, Rich St. Pierre has struggled to redefine his relationships with his three children. It hasn't been easy.

Three months after Carolynne St. Pierre died, her husband, Rich, started going to a grief support group. It helped some, he said, though he didn't feel like he belonged.

When Carolynne was alive and fighting an uncommon liver cancer with chemotherapy, she often would look at other patients in the treatment suite and notice that most were older and grayer. She would feel like the odd one out. Members of Rich's support group were older, too, and had lived decades with their spouses. He and Carolynne had less than seven years together.

"Here I am saying the same exact thing," Rich said. "I don't belong here right now. . . I'm in my mid-40s. I lost my wife."

For the past seven years, Carolynne had guided Rich into parenthood, first with her children from a previous marriage, Melissa and Brian Thone, now 15 and 13, and then with their son, Elijah, now 5.

After Carolynne died at age 44 on Feb. 10, Rich was a single parent to three kids. Melissa was a teenager beginning to push for more independence, who had to take on more responsibility at home. Brian was a middle-schooler who resisted Rich's authority and spent a lot of time in the principal's office. Elijah was an aggressive

boy on his way to kindergarten struggling to understand that his mother was gone.

Carolynne wasn't there to help.

An image kept returning to Rich in the first months without her: He was slogging through waist-deep mud. He was pulling a sled upon which sat his responsibilities: Melissa, Brian, Elijah. Dry ground was far from sight, and darkness was all around him.

A single parent

Carolynne's family buried her body in Blossom Hill Cemetery on Valentine's Day.

See FOUR - A4

Story by Chelsea Conaboy ♦ Photos by Preston Gannaway

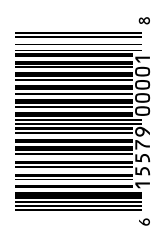


MIXTURE

Cloudy this morning, becoming mixed this afternoon and evening. Tomorrow, we might even see some sun. High 36,

low 11. Peter Grace, 5, of Eastman School in Concord, draws a gray day. B6

Calendar	D4
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CAMPAIGN 2008

Celebs endorse, but do we listen?

Famous voices join the primary hubbub

By MELANIE ASMAR
Monitor staff

The biggest event of the primary will star someone who isn't running for president: Oprah. The queen of all talk shows is coming to Manchester tomorrow to rally 10,000 people in support of Barack Obama, whom Oprah has called "my favorite guy." There's a waiting list to even get in the door.

But it's unclear whether Oprah will win any votes for the Democratic senator. Pundits who have long said celebrity endorsements don't matter are rethinking their logic when it comes to Oprah. Nine million people watch her show every day. She can make people read William Faulkner.

"Curt Schilling endorsed McCain. I thought that was pretty great because he played a big role in the Red Sox victory."

Teresa Horymski, Horseshoe Pond Place resident

She's loaded.

Other pundits, however, are sticking to their guns. Their skeptical guns.

The *Monitor* set out yesterday to solve the mystery of celebrity endorsements. Do they matter? Would Red Sox Nation follow Curt

Schilling to the ends of the Earth? How about to the ballot box?

The answer was no, probably not. An unscientific survey of folks around Concord revealed that most don't care who Barbra Streisand picks for president. (Hillary Clinton, in case you're wondering.)

"I'm my own person," said Sylvia Columbia, a resident of Horseshoe Pond Place, an elderly housing complex in Concord. "I listen to what (the celebrities) have to say and make up my own mind."

However, Teresa Horymski, another resident, overheard Columbia's answer and chimed in.

"Curt Schilling endorsed McCain," she told Columbia as they settled in for lunch. "I thought that was pretty great

See ENDORSE - A8

CONCORD

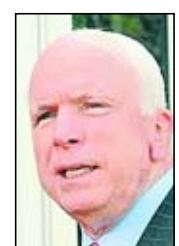
McCain: Despite report, Iran remains dangerous

Senator showcases foreign policy stands

By MARGOT SANGER-KATZ
Monitor staff

The world should not take too much solace from this week's intelligence estimate suggesting Iran has not been pursuing a nuclear weapon program for several years, Arizona Sen. John McCain told a group of *Monitor* reporters and editors this week.

Though the news is good, Iran's government is still dangerous and adversarial. And though it appears that human intelligence has improved, he said, the report's reversal of recent conclusions highlights problems in U.S.



McCain

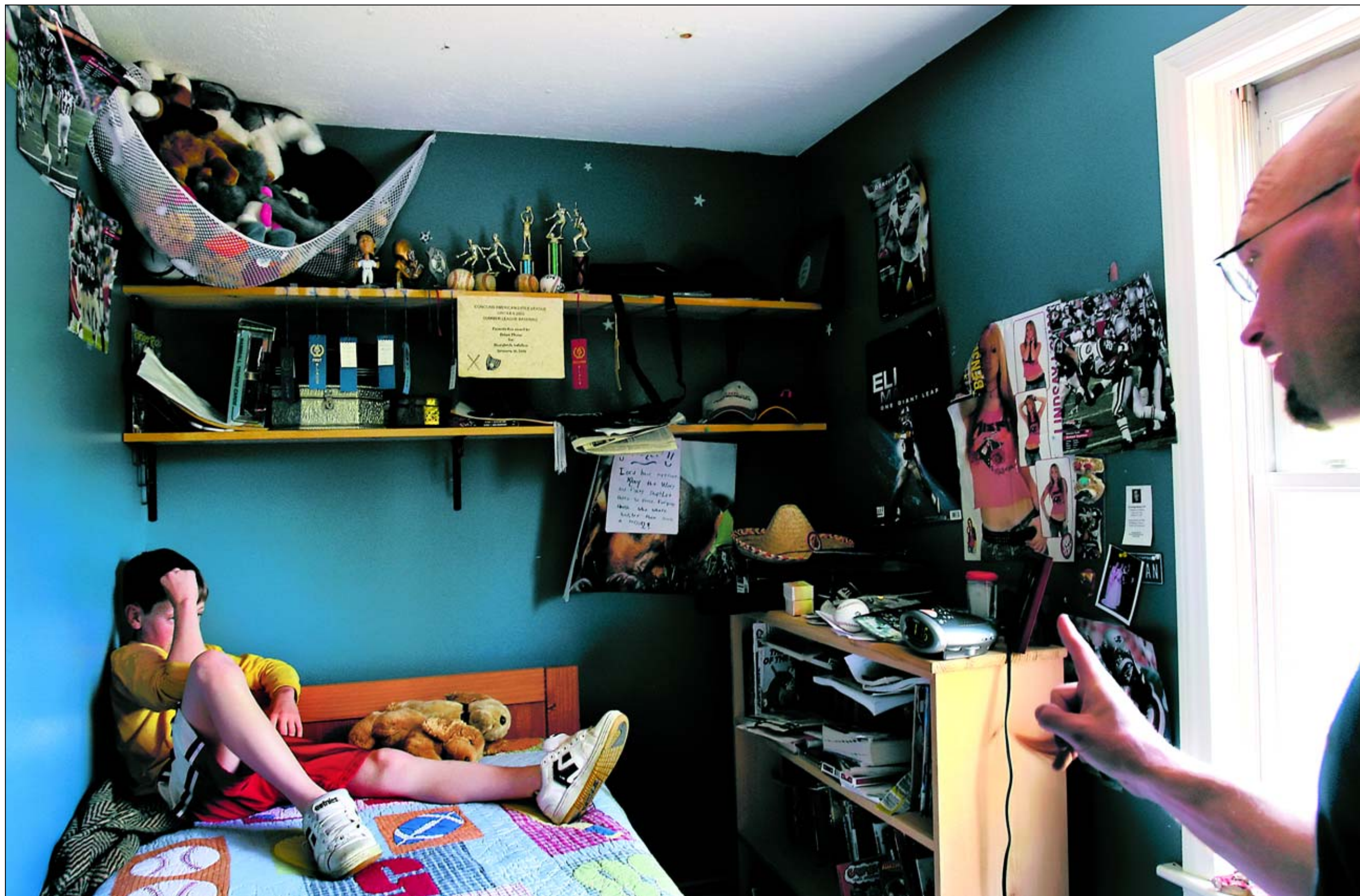
intelligence more broadly. "Iran still supports Hamas and Hezbollah, terrorist organizations bent on the destruction of Israel," he said, and it still supplies Iraqi insurgents with some of the most deadly explosive devices used against U.S. troops.

McCain said that he hopes the information could form the basis for new talks between the U.S. and Iran, but he warned that the U.S. needs to be careful not to give Iranian President Mahmoud

See MCCAIN - A8



Carolynne's family places roses on her casket after her funeral at St. Paul's Church in Concord last February. Friends and family dressed in pink, her favorite color.



Rich disciplines Brian after the two got into an argument during a visit to Carolynne's grave earlier in the day. As their relationship became more and more strained and Brian increasingly got into trouble, Rich said he knew he could not take care of all three children.

FOUR

Continued from A1

The first major snowstorm of the year laid a blanket of quiet over the busy anxiety that had occupied friends and family in the previous weeks, when they had kept vigils by Carolynne's bedside, cared for the kids and prepared for the funeral.

When Carolynne's sisters returned home to New York and New Jersey, and Melissa and Brian were back to school and sports, a stillness came to the St. Pierres' Second Street home in Concord. Rich returned to work and busied himself planning memory boxes for the kids and sorting through Carolynne's belongings. But there were moments of silence that he couldn't avoid, when his too-short years with Carolynne played over and over in his head.

The couple met on a blind date in 2000, set up by a mother who Carolynne had met when she was a maternity nurse at Concord Hospital's The Family Place. Just over two years later, Elijah was born. In April 2004, Carolynne was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma. Rich and Carolynne married days before she underwent surgery to remove one-third of her liver.

The years that followed brought months of recovery, a brief cancer-free period and the return of a tumor. Carolynne began chemotherapy with a doctor in New York who offered progressive drugs and what she saw as her best hope for more time with her children. She traveled back and forth, worried that the insurance company would follow through on threats not to cover the treatment.

Rich and Carolynne invited the *Monitor* to

follow their family starting in March 2006 to help document Carolynne's story for her children. The *Monitor* published several stories about the St. Pierres during their ordeal, the last one shortly after Carolynne's death. Since then, Rich has allowed a reporter and photographer to continue to follow the family.

Rich showed his wife a careful tenderness in her illness. When her legs swelled with fluid that her liver couldn't process, he held

her as if in a slow dance as they shuffled together to or from her favorite chair. In her final days, he guided her broken and scarred body in the shower and asked her again if she would marry him. In a hospital bed set up in a spare bedroom, he lay next to her the night before she died.

Rich said he was uplifted by how full the church was at her funeral. For months – and even years – friends had sent meals and

cards to the house and provided rides for the kids. They'd filled the living room for a Christmas party the family held days after doctors told Carolynne she might not make it to the new year.

"It was a real community effort to support this little family of five," Rich said. "Now we're four, and I'm a single parent."

Rich didn't seek formal counseling. He said he didn't feel like he had the "license or luxury" to dig into his feelings. He worked. Carolynne's insurance ultimately covered all outstanding chemotherapy claims. But Rich had had less time to invest in his geospatial consulting business during Carolynne's illness.

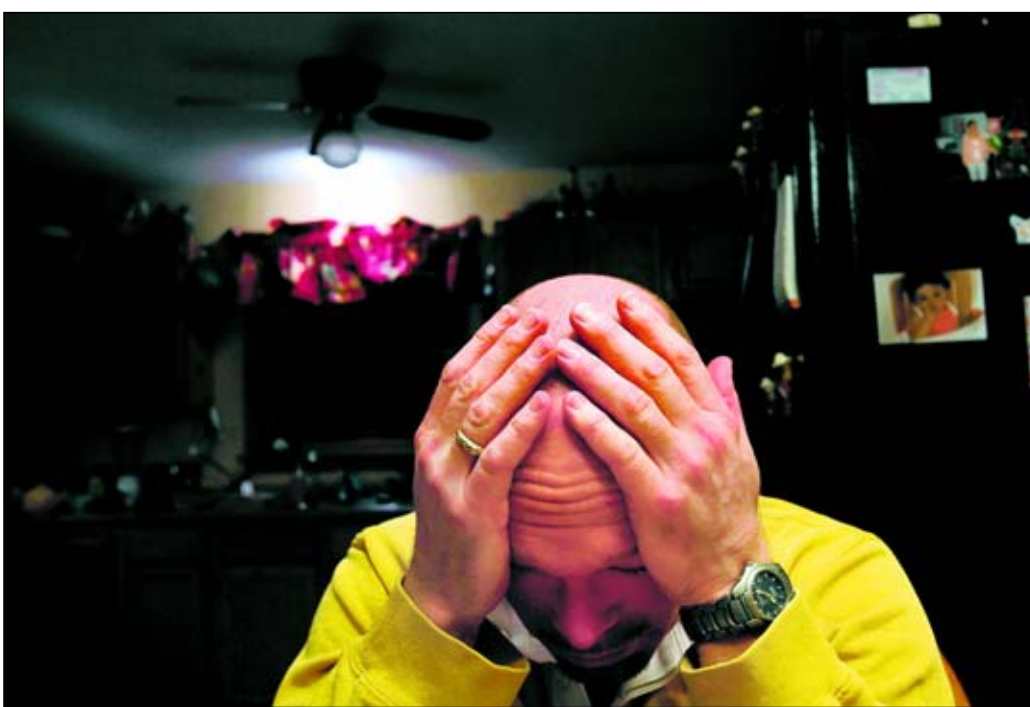
He sought solace in the people who were there when she died – her sisters, her mother, a cousin and friends from The Family Place. He tried writing to her in his journal, and he clung to his belief that he would see Carolynne again in the next life.

"If I could find her and go to her, I would," he said. "But that's not possible. I guess that gets replaced with – I just wait. And wait."

Without her

In late March, Melissa heated a frozen pizza for Elijah while Rich helped him out of a bath. The phone rang for Brian, and Rich told the caller that he couldn't talk. Brian had been suspended from school, one of a long string of incidents he'd had that winter.

Though often charming, Brian had been struggling with anger and depression before his mother's death. After, his behavior worsened. Brian walked downstairs to where Rich stood in the kitchen and wrapped his arms around Rich's waist.



Exhausted from work and taking care of the kids during the first two months after Carolynne's death, Rich said he looked forward just to going to bed at night.

See **FOUR – A5**



On Mother's Day, Rich and Elijah plant trees in the backyard to memorialize Carolynne. Rich has talked with Elijah about what happened to his mom, but he said it's hard to know how much the boy understands.

'I need to find peace, and I need to find happiness. We've got to grow.'

FOUR

Continued from A4

"Good, good," Rich said, patting him on the back and turning away.

Brian asked Rich if he would watch a movie with him in the basement, and Rich told him no. He was taking care of Elijah.

"Rich, I want company downstairs," Brian said. "You never spend any time with me."

He slammed the door and stormed downstairs. Rich sent him to his room and returned to the kitchen to wash dishes.

"What I need is my wife back in a huge way," he said.

By early April, Rich was overwhelmed and started looking at boarding schools for Brian. A flier for a New Hampshire school was pinned on the bulletin board in the kitchen when Brian came home and spotted it. His uncle Joe St. Pierre and grandmother Kathryn Seigle sat at the table.

"Is this where he's going to send me?" Brian said, taking the flier off the wall. "Is it a summer camp?"

"Oh, this is a school," Joe said after a long pause. "Like a full-time school."

"He's going to send me there?" Brian said. "I'm staying at Rundlett." He pinned the flier back on the board and left the room.

A few moments later, Elijah and Rich arrived from day care. Elijah sat down at the table next to his grandmother, a frown on his face.

"I had a bad day," he said. She asked him why. "All I know is that I was kicking and hitting."

It was becoming a regular problem for Elijah. A muscular boy accustomed to roughhousing with his older brother, he had trouble playing gently with the other kids.

For weeks after Carolynne's death, Kathryn was afraid to come back to Concord and not see her daughter sitting in the living room, where Kathryn had kept her company for afternoons on end. She didn't want to watch the videos that Carolynne had made for her children before she died. She didn't want to visit the grave.

The grandchildren helped her find her role again. She would say later that she sensed her daughter's eerie non-presence.

"One of the things is that she's gone and life goes on," she said. "There's something so sad about that. We live and we're gone, and so what? But maybe that's a good thing, too."

On Mother's Day, Rich brought the children to visit Carolynne's grave. He propped up a photo album that had her picture on the cover alongside a vase of pink roses. He began reading the messages that Carolynne had left in her journal for Rich and each of her children.

To Rich, she had written that she wished she could "finish my part."

"I have no doubts about you being a good



Melissa plays with Elijah through the screen door while babysitting for him. "In this family, you don't really get attention unless you do something bad, or if something's wrong with you," Melissa said. "I'm kind of glad that I don't get the attention, because I'm not the one to be in the spotlight."



On the first day of school, the family walks Elijah to Beaver Meadow Elementary School. One of Carolynne's goals was to live long enough to see him start kindergarten. Because she wasn't there, family members came to support him. With Elijah (from left to right) are Carolynne's mother, Kathryn Seigle, Melissa, Carolynne's sister Laura and her daughter Sofia, family friend Charity Ross, Rich, and Rich's brother Joe St. Pierre.

See ST. PIERRE - A6



Elijah, Rich and Melissa visit Story Land in Glen. Carolynne had requested that Rich take Elijah to Story Land every summer until he outgrew it. Brian and Melissa grew up taking yearly trips to the amusement park.

ST. PIERRE

Continued from A5

dad, but it's not possible to be a mom and a dad," she wrote.

Rich handed the book to Melissa to read. She started and stopped and told him she couldn't. Elijah ran back and forth across the grave and, with each pass, Brian scowled deeper.

"In time, we're going to hurt less and love more," Rich told them. "Everything Mom was for us as individuals..."

Brian interrupted him, yelling at Elijah to stop. "It's pissing me off," he said.

Rich became frustrated, and soon they were packing up to go home.

"I can't wait to get him out of here," Rich muttered.

'We've got to grow'

On June 21, a week after finishing sixth grade at Rundlett Middle School, Brian left home for a therapeutic wilderness program in North Carolina called SUWS of the Carolinas, an alternative to boot camps that offers clinical treatment for behavioral problems in a natural setting.

Melissa said she was happy at first to see him go. Like lots of siblings, they nagged at each other. With Brian gone, Rich turned his attention to her, she said. Rich said he wanted to start setting some ground rules. For example, she had to tell him where she went with friends and who would be coming to the house.

"Rich doesn't have anyone to pick on, so I'm the new target," she said.

Rich said he found it easier to focus on two children.

"It's manageable with Elijah and Melissa," he said. "I feel like I can do it."

But he also was overwhelmed by a new grief. His older sister, Rose Mattozzi, had collapsed on Father's Day and died of a suspected aneurysm. Rose had taken care of Rich and his brothers after their mother had died suddenly when Rich was 7. It was that early loss that had made Carolynne's death too familiar to Rich. Now Rose was gone.

"It's all very haunting," he said.

Through the summer, Rich talked often about finding new joys in his life. He dreamed up plans to rent a house in Maine, buy a boat, get away for the weekend or rent a motorcycle.

"My dead lawn is driving me crazy," he said and hired landscapers. He had the driveway repaved and extended to add a shed to shelter the motorcycle he would buy someday. It would replace the one he sold to help with Carolynne's medical bills.

"I need to find peace, and I need to find happiness," he said. "We've got to grow."

August brought the six-month anniversary of Carolynne's death and what would have been her 45th birthday. It was a time of reckoning for the family.

Carolynne's sisters, Sara Maters and Laura Cummins, had visited New Hampshire from their homes in New Jersey and New York as often as possible over the previous six months. They had their coping to do, too, and Carolynne's death had put strains on their own family lives.

Sara dreamed one night of a dog that fell off a terrace of a high-rise building. In the dream, she ran to the ground floor and found the dog

alive.

"I just totally don't believe that (Carolynne's) dead," she said. "I don't know where that shift occurs and where it goes from being unreal to being real."

The family held a small birthday party for Carolynne and visited Story Land with Melissa and Elijah, something Carolynne had asked Rich to do each year to carry on a tradition.

"The success is we're all here together," Rich said as he cut a cake in her honor. "I do wish Brian was here for this."

The family had decided to send Brian to boarding school at the end of the summer. Laura had argued against it at first, worried about

good grades and had lots of friends, but Laura and others worried that the impact of her mom's loss would come back to her in the future.

"In this family, you don't really get attention unless you do something bad, or if something's wrong with you," Melissa said. "I'm kind of glad that I don't get the attention, because I'm not the one to be in the spotlight."

Melissa grew to miss Brian, which she hadn't expected. She grew closer to Elijah, too, though she felt she was spending too much time babysitting him. She had asked Rich to hire a nanny. She talked briefly about moving out to live with the family's longtime babysitter, Charity Ross, or Joe, her uncle. She

to the beach. She also set longer-term hopes. Seeing Melissa turn 16, was one. Bringing Elijah to his first day of school was another.

"We didn't make it," Rich said.

Instead, Aunt Laura and her daughter, Grandma Kathryn, Uncle Joe, Melissa and Rich escorted him to Beaver Meadow School. They watched him line up with the other kids. In the classroom, he sat down holding a stuffed octopus on the alphabet rug at the front of the room. Kathryn watched from the back.

"You know, it may be a really fresh start for him," she said.

That sense of new beginnings continued when Rich went to visit Brian at the SUWS program and take him to his new school in South Carolina. Brian was beginning to

"I have no doubts about you being a good dad, but it's not possible to be a mom and a dad," she wrote.

whether there would be any money left if other family members needed help in coping.

"The cancer spread through the whole family," Laura said. "People don't want to talk about the reality, because it's just too hard."

Both Laura and Sara said Rich had to change for the family to move forward. Laura said the tenderness that Rich had shown with her sister had disappeared.

"He's so rigid, he's going to break," she said.

The family worried about how much responsibility Melissa, soon to be a sophomore at Concord High, was taking on. Melissa made

said she grew tired at times of Rich wanting to talk about her mom.

"Do you ever get in one of those moods when you just want to sit, ride in the car, not talk?" she said. "I would be on my way to a friend's house and I was really excited and he would just have to make it sad. . . . He had so many other people he could talk to. I didn't really understand why it had to be me."

'We've kept it alive'

Elijah's first day of kindergarten was a family event. Carolynne had set short-term goals through her illness: a birthday, a holiday, a trip

change, and Rich was encouraged.

In late October, Kathryn returned for a visit. There was a chill outside and, petite like her daughter was, she put on a blue coat that had been Carolynne's. She and Rich took Elijah for a walk by the Merrimack River.

Elijah lagged behind on the path. He looked up and mistook the blue jacket for his mother, running after and calling for "Momma."

Rich said later that the sound broke his heart. So many times Elijah had called for Carolynne that way, and she had been there to turn and answer him.

Rich had talked with Elijah about what happened to his mom. But he said it's hard to know how much he understands. Months before she

died, Carolynne fell down the stairs, with Elijah on her back, fracturing her sternum.

"She's dead," Elijah said in October when asked about his mom. "Her liver broke. She, like, fell down the stairs. But her liver broke."

On Nov. 12, Rich left for a four-day visit with Brian at his new school. He was further encouraged by Brian's progress and started planning for him to come home for a visit at Christmas.

Just as they had done with Carolynne for the last few years, Rich, Melissa and Elijah traveled to New Jersey for Thanksgiving. Sara said she was happy they visited.

"It's always been a little bit of a worry that there would be more of a disconnect with the family," she said.

Rich said he enjoyed watching Melissa interact with her cousins, being 15 and "cool." He was glad to see Elijah growing closer to his grandmother, too.

"You don't have to keep going," Rich said. "Families dissolve and disintegrate after death, but we've kept it alive."

There were still plenty of challenges. In the week after Thanksgiving, Elijah was reprimanded

eight times in two days at his morning day care for hitting teachers or other kids. There were more incidents at kindergarten. Rich planned to hire a counselor.

"I'll need some decoding," he said. "I've got to get help."

Overall, Rich said, he felt the family was progressing. His voice sounds lighter these days and he laughs more easily.

"You travel through the valley, right? You just keep traveling until you come up out of it. Or for me, slogging my sled through the great wasteland," he said with a laugh. "There is no longevity. You have to make it count every day."

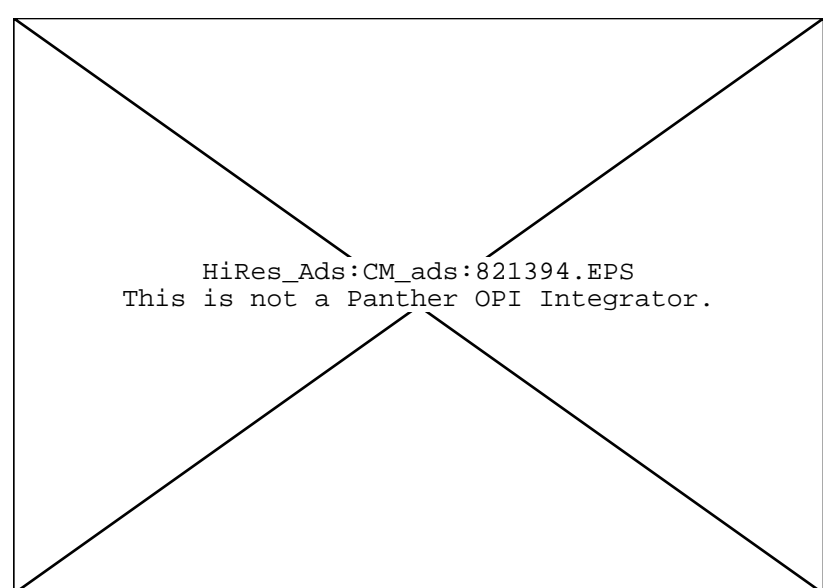
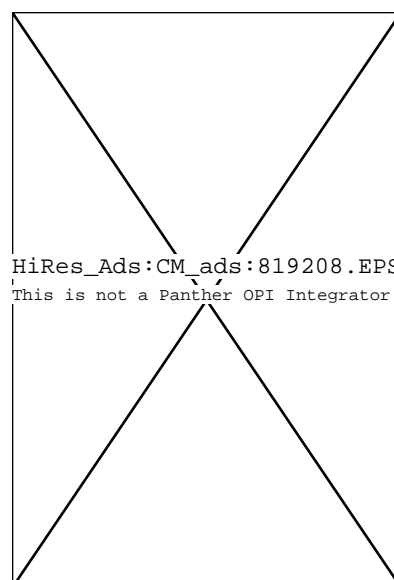
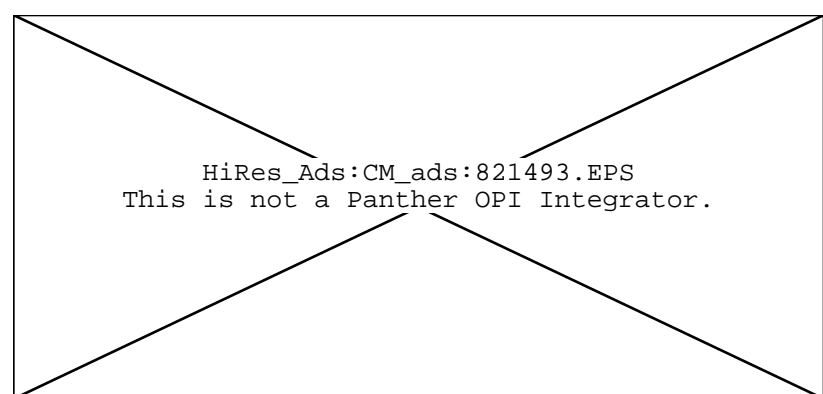
He has started to take some of the dozens of photos of Carolynne that had been displayed around the house and move them into the spare bedroom where she had spent her last days. Some sit on a dresser that holds her clothing and belongings. He's making space. He said he wants to put up more photographs of the kids.

Tomorrow: Rich and Brian build a relationship.

SUNDAY ON THE WEB:

A FAMILY'S STORY

For a multimedia presentation, see cmonitor.com/rememberme starting this Sunday. The site documents the past two years of the St. Pierres' lives through photos and interviews.



HOUSING Continued from A1

appealed the decision to the housing authority – with the support of her landlord – and is now fighting the termination in court. Nault, who also has two daughters, 11 and 8, works full time and is recovering from years of bad health associated with Crohn's disease, according to the court records.

She had relied on the assistance from the housing authority to pay her nearly \$600 monthly rent, according to court records.

She could not be reached for comment but remains in her home awaiting resolution of the case, Perez said. He added that losing the Section 8 housing assistance could also jeopardize Nault's plan to seek state assistance to buy the home she is renting.

"Ms. Nault's son is accused of making a serious mistake, but he is not someone whose family should lose subsidized housing," Perez wrote in Nault's appeal to the housing authority. He declined to say how much assistance Nault had received.

John Hoyt Jr., executive director of the Concord Housing Authority, defended his agency's decision to revoke Nault's assistance. When she first applied for federal housing assistance in 1998, she signed an agreement acknowledging that accusations of drug or violent criminal activity could cost her her housing assis-

tance, he said.

"We are using taxpayer money (to provide housing assistance), and we follow the federal policy of one strike and you are out," said Hoyt, "especially when it comes to drugs or to violent crime." Enforcing that policy without exception is the only way to create maximum deterrence, he said.

The housing authority's lawyer, Brian Shaughnessy of Manchester, disputed Perez's claim that the authority relied only on an arrest log as evidence against Nault's son. Shaughnessy said Nault herself admitted that her son had been arrested and had drugs. Nault also volunteered that her son had been in a drug diversion program, Shaughnessy said.

It's not unusual for the Concord Housing Authority to review police logs and newspaper arrest reports for information about people receiving federal housing assistance, Hoyt said. "We keep a good history," he said. He also said this is not the first time a news account has prompted action from the agency.

Perez said New Hampshire Legal Assistance sees cases like Nault's more often than it would like. It took on the case not only to help Nault but also to establish a fairer review process. Perez said, at minimum, the agency must follow its own rules governing what sort of evidence determines guilt

and how a client can challenge that evidence.

This case began around 7 p.m. on Aug. 7 when the Concord police arrested Joseph Nault III on West Street. He had just graduated from high school but is described in court records as immature and suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. This was his first drug arrest, according to court records.

At a preliminary appeal hearing in October, Nault admitted her son had been arrested. Shaughnessy said Nault also admitted that her son had the drugs as charged. Perez, however, says she did not.

The housing authority rejected the appeal and told Nault her assistance would end as of December. She appealed again and asked for a formal hearing. At that hearing, Nault's lawyer raised two issues. Perez asked the housing authority to use its discretion and give Nault a second chance. Perez also argued that the housing authority had not produced the required "preponderance of evidence" that Joseph Nault had possessed drugs. An arrest, Perez said, requires only probable cause, a lower threshold.

The housing authority rejected the request for leniency because authority staff believe the only way to enforce the housing regu-

lations is to enforce them uniformly, Shaughnessy said. If the authority begins making exceptions, it will be accused of favoritism or discrimination, he said.

Perez's disagreements over the evidence also failed to persuade the housing authority. In late October, it rejected the second appeal.

Perez asked the housing authority to reconsider in November, and when it declined, he filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Concord on Dec. 3. He has asked the court to prohibit the housing authority from terminating Nault's housing assistance and to make up any unpaid rent.

Shaughnessy has not had time to respond to the lawsuit but said this week that he intends to propose a compromise that would allow Nault to continue receiving her housing assistance while the case works its way through the federal court.

Nault's landlord declined to comment, other than to say Nault had been a great tenant. The landlord, Mary Caldwell of Concord, has asked the housing authority to continue Nault's assistance. Joseph Nault still lives with his mother but is now working at McDonald's and contributing \$50 a week toward rent, according to court records. He hopes to attend Hesser College.

McCAIN Continued from A1

Ahmadinejad a public relations opportunity without being certain that he would grant certain concessions.

In a broad discussion that touched on health care policy, immigration and the war in Iraq, McCain, who is seeking the Republican nomination for president, focused on detailed appraisals of the country's international threats, showcasing his long history in military and foreign policy matters. On the stump, McCain has emphasized those credentials, arguing that he's ready to speak to the world's leaders without additional training or an over-reliance on advisers.

This week's visit was McCain's second with the *Monitor's* editorial board in recent months, and comes at a time when he is consolidating his campaign effort in New Hampshire and seeing his poll numbers rise here.

His last visit came in a darker hour for his campaign, after several top aides left and financial reports showed the campaign nearly broke.

"We've come back, Lazarus like, as you know," McCain joked about his change in fortunes.

Iran, he said, can't be seen in isolation. U.S. policy there will ripple throughout the region, just as U.S. successes and failures in Iraq have influenced the country's relationships with Iraq's neighbors.

"I think all of these countries are connected. I think events are connected," he said, citing political developments in Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Palestinian territories. "People sensed American power, American success, etc., and their behavior was affected by it. Then we started failing."

McCain reiterated his strong support for the current Iraq war strategy and its leader, Gen. David Petraeus. The so-called troop surge has led to tangible improvements in security, McCain said, though he acknowledged that he's frustrated with the pace of political reform in the country.

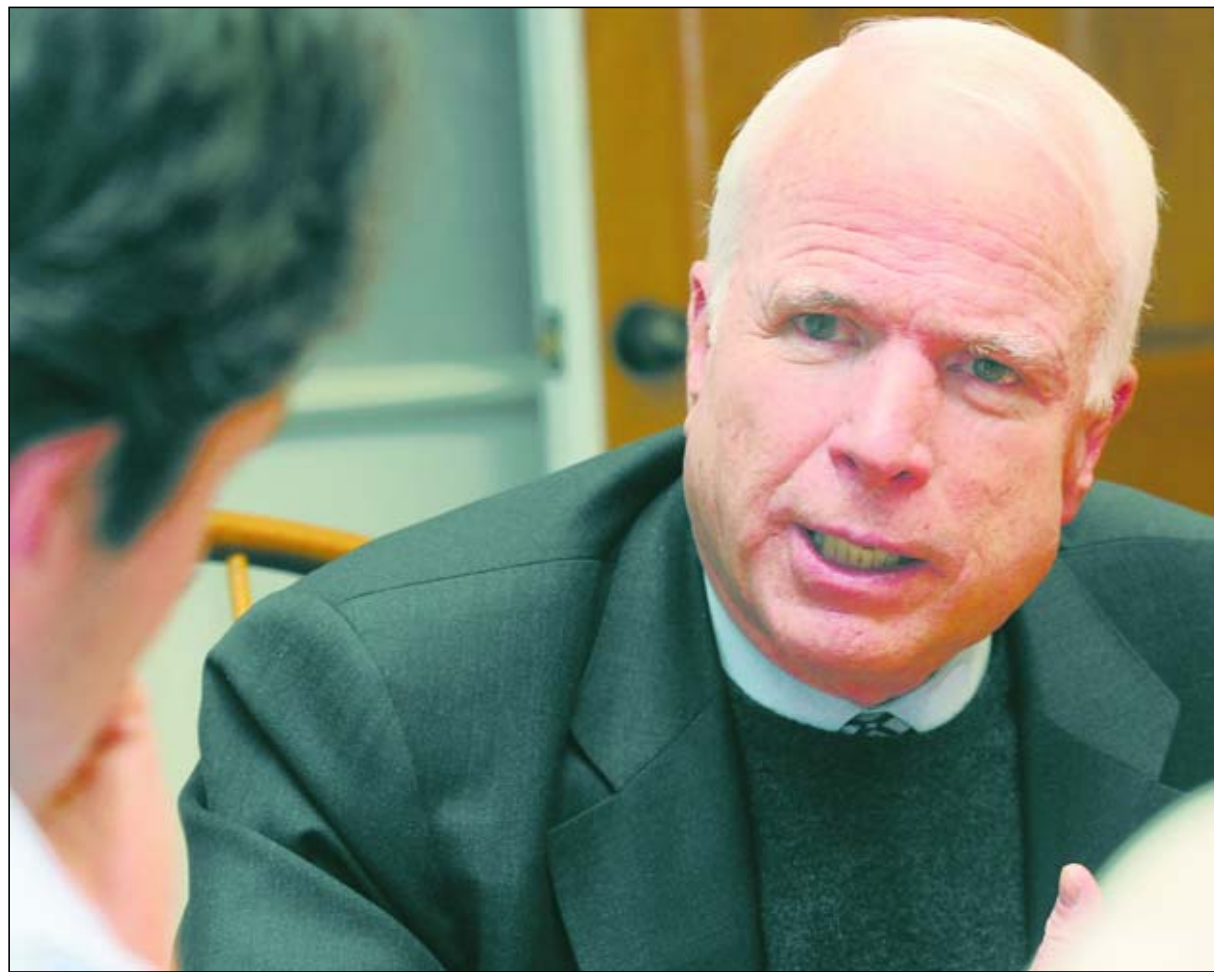
Military leaders are doing the best they can picking up the pieces after years of poor leadership, McCain said. He was an early and vocal critic of former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, and often says that he's the only Republican candidate for president who clashed publicly with the president on the war strategy. Now he likens the early years of the war to "watching a train wreck," and President Bush's case for the war as a "colossal intelligence failure."

But he is unflinching in his belief that a stable Iraq is vital to U.S. interests going forward.

"Compared to Saddam Hussein, compared to having it be a base of al-Qaida operations, which Gen. Petraeus said it would be if we left, it's a success," he said.

He was less optimistic about current operations in Afghanistan, where he said he was disappointed that several U.S. allies there were planning to remove their troops. The current instability in Pakistan, he said, could also make Afghanistan a more dangerous place.

On domestic policy, McCain emphasized health care reform as the issue that will likely be most important in the general election



KEN WILLIAMS / Monitor staff

Sen. John McCain speaks with *Monitor* editors and reporters this week.

"I think all of these countries are connected. I think events are connected," McCain said, citing political developments in Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Palestinian territories. "People sensed American power, American success, etc., and their behavior was affected by it. Then we started failing."

race. But he was highly critical of the universal health care proposals put forth by Democratic candidates. McCain favors systemic measures he says will lower the cost of health care and make insurance more affordable.

His plan includes a \$5,000 refundable tax credit for each family, deregulation of insurance markets, and a return to HMO-style payments for care, where insurers pay doctors for a bundle of services related to an illness, not for each individual visit or test.

He acknowledged that \$5,000 alone would not be enough for families to purchase comprehensive health insurance, but he said it would likely help low-income families purchase some form of coverage and would help reduce the cost of expensive policies for wealthier families.

The rising cost of health care is affecting the economy broadly, he said, putting pressure on employers who might offer more jobs and taxing individuals whose incomes have been eroded by rising premiums.

He said that as president, he would not be open to a plan that included a requirement that every American buy insurance. Health insurance, like a home or college education, he said, should be "affordable and available" but not mandatory, and not provided by

the federal government. He said that the Democratic plans will make health care more expensive by increasing federal bureaucracies while failing to harness individuals' desire to minimize their costs.

"When it's free and it's no cost to you, obviously you are less cognizant of how you use it and less careful," he said. "Ronald Reagan once said, 'nobody ever washed a rental car,' and when you think about that, I mean it's a true statement."

McCain also said he's been disappointed with the way his party has taken on the issue of immigration. In recent years, McCain backed a comprehensive immigration reform package that would have boosted border security, while creating temporary work permits and providing a path to legalization for some immigrants who had entered the country illegally. That position cost him support from many Republicans who described the policy as "amnesty."

Now, McCain says he's learned the lesson of that debate – that Americans need to be certain that the borders are secure before they're willing to take on more comprehensive reform – but he continues to chart a more moderate course than many of his rivals on the issue. His discussions with voters on the campaign trail have

emphasized how emotional the issue is to many, he said, counting it as the most heated public discourse he can recall in his political career.

"I'm saddened by some of the aspects of this issue," he said. "We are all human beings. They are God's children. They have broken our laws by coming here illegally, and they cannot be anything but punished for it. And they would have to get in line behind everybody else who came here legally, otherwise we would be countenancing illegal behavior. But I can assure you today there's a safehouse in Phoenix where a whole bunch of people are crammed in, and the coyote is probably beating up on them. I can assure you that some person is crossing the desert and he's probably dying, especially in the summertime. I can assure you that some guy is at work right now today, was picked up on a street corner, is going to work all day, and at the end of the day, the guy that picked him up is going to say, 'Take a hike pal. If you don't like it, turn me in.' It's a routine thing."

McCain also pitched himself as a candidate capable of overcoming some of the fighting and partisanship in government. He cited his years-long relationships with Democratic congressional leaders and his willingness to cooperate on previous issues. Voters want legislators and the president to work together and accomplish things, he said, and the current low congressional approval ratings have been caused by the parties' inability to compromise.

"I'd drive up to (Senate Democratic Leader) Harry Reid's office and I'd say, 'Harry, we need to fix Social Security,'" he said. "And I'll give you all the credit, but we've got to do it, and we've got to show the American people that we'll work on their behalf."

ENDORSE Continued from A1

because he played a big role in the Red Sox victory. I'll go with Curt Schilling."

A reporter yesterday showed a couple of dozen people the names and photographs of six celebrity endorsers. Besides Oprah, Schilling and Streisand, there was Chuck Norris, who's backing Mike Huckabee; Adam Sandler, a New Hampshire boy who's donated big bucks to Rudy Giuliani's campaign; and Willie Nelson, who's endorsed peace-loving Dennis Kucinich for the second time in a row.

While most people said a celebrity endorsement ultimately won't influence their decision on voting day, the stars seemed to have more pull with younger voters. A group of New Hampshire Technical Institute students erupted when asked about Chuck Norris and Willie Nelson.

"Chuck Norris is a tool!" said Evan Roberge, 20. "He'll roundhouse kick the terrorists!"

"Willie Nelson would be a good one. But he does a lot of pot smoking."

Nick Constant, 18

"Willie Nelson would be a good one," said Nick Constant, 18. "But he does a lot of pot smoking."

David Couture, 20, was more thoughtful. Though he's already made up his mind to support Ron Paul, Couture said he'd take a serious look at candidates endorsed by Oprah, Schilling and Sandler, all of whom he said he respects. Couture said he respects Sandler most of all.

"He's wise," said Couture, who wants to be a standup comedian. "He's my biggest role model."

Melissa Goodwin, 26, would perhaps say the same about Oprah. At the least, she said, she's a fan. But she, like most people interviewed for this story, doesn't put much stock in which celebrity backs which candidate. Though she watches Oprah's show, Goodwin said she's not supporting Obama.

She's doubtful all of the 10,000 who'll pack the Verizon Wireless Arena tomorrow are, either.

"They just want to see Oprah," she said of the thousands of ticket-holders. "Are you kidding?"

They get along famously



Oprah Winfrey



Barack Obama



Barbra Streisand



Hillary Clinton



Chuck Norris



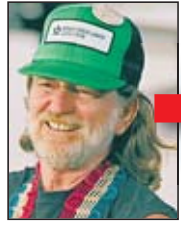
Mike Huckabee



Adam Sandler



Rudy Giuliani



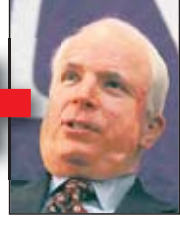
Willie Nelson



Dennis Kucinich



Curt Schilling



John McCain

HIS WINNING SNAP



ARNOLD HARDY / AP file

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph taken by Arnold Hardy, a woman leaps from an upper story to escape the burning Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta on Dec. 7, 1946.

Hardy, 85, died Wednesday at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta of complications following hip surgery. Hardy was a 24-year-old Georgia Tech graduate student and amateur photographer when he took the photo, using his last flashbulb to capture the image in the darkness. After developing the photo, he sold it to The Associated Press for \$300, and it became the defining

image of the fire. While initial accounts said the woman in the photo fell to her death, the 1993 book *The Winecoff Fire* identified the woman as a survivor, Daisy McCumber, 41.

