

CONNECTICUT & R.I.

THE DAY, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2003

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Gov. Rowland survives a tough week

Hartford (AP) — The Hartford Courant called for Gov. John G. Rowland to resign in an editorial prepared for today, capping an extraordinary week for the governor, who acknowledged accepting thousands of dollars in gifts from friends, state employees and state contractors.

“Enough of this gubernatorial nonsense. The way to end this sad spectacle is for the governor to resign,” The Courant wrote, a week after warning Rowland he had just one more chance to come clean.

“His repeated deceptions as well as the wide-ranging federal investigation of alleged corruption in his administration have had a debilitating effect on state government,” the newspaper said.

A spokesman for Rowland reiterated that

‘Everything has to be looked at in perspective in terms of what I’ve done in the last nine years.’

Gov. John G. Rowland

the governor would not step down.

“The governor ran for his third term to improve education across our state and revitalize Connecticut’s cities,” John Wiltse said. “And he’s going to finish the job.”

The blistering editorial from the state’s largest newspaper brought to four the number of newspapers calling for him to step down.

The Journal-Inquirer of Manchester, The Day of New London and The Herald of New Britain have all called for the governor’s

resignation. Other newspapers have suggested he step aside while an investigation is conducted.

Rowland has spent the days since Dec. 12 apologizing for his actions and insisting he plans to remain chief executive of the state of Connecticut.

On Dec. 14 Rowland made his first public comments since releasing documents that showed that some of the renovations at his summer cottage in Litchfield were paid for or performed by members of his staff, per-

sonal friends, and employees of the Tomasso Group, a contractor with over \$100 million in state projects.

The cottage had been the subject of a series of reports in The Courant. The documents showed that many of those involved in the cottage renovations were the same people named in a federal corruption investigation. That probe became public in the spring, when Rowland’s former deputy chief of staff, Lawrence Alibozek, pleaded guilty to charges he accepted gold and cash in exchange for steering state contracts.

Alibozek — whom Rowland said Friday he barely knew — and former co-Chief of Staff Peter Ellef paid for over \$5,000 worth

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Third suspect in auto shop killings to be charged; fourth still sought

Hartford — A third suspect in a triple homicide at a Windsor Locks auto shop was being escorted back to Connecticut Saturday. Jose Guzman, 22, was taken into custody in Orlando, Fla. Wednesday night, police said. He waived extradition, and would arrive at Bradley International Airport Saturday afternoon, police said. Police said they planned to formally charge Guzman with murder, felony murder and conspiracy to commit murder. According to published reports, police believe the July triple killing was a murder-for-hire scheme. B&B Automotive Inc. co-owner Robert Stears was reportedly the target, and co-owner Barry Rossi, 43 and employee Lorne Stevens, 38, were apparently killed because they happened to be at the shop, police sources said. On Wednesday police also arrested Erik Martinez, 21, of Hartford and Michael Castillo, 19, of East Hartford. Martinez and Castillo each face charges of capital felony murder and conspiracy. The capital felony charges carry potential death sentences. State Police were seeking a fourth suspect. Published reports have said police believe Benedetto Cipriani arranged the plot because he was upset about a personal relationship with someone known to him and Stears. Authorities believe he has fled to Italy.

Rhode Island trial of reputed mob soldier ends with hung jury

Providence — The trial of reputed mob associate Vito DeLuca on charges he participated in a lucrative gambling ring ended with a hung jury. A mistrial was declared on Friday after a Superior Court jury remained deadlocked after two days of deliberations. DeLuca, 59, of Seekonk, Mass., is a reputed soldier in the Patriarca crime family. Authorities say he participated in a gambling ring that brought in more than \$600,000 in one month in late 1999. DeLuca still faces possible deportation to Italy due to prior convictions. In 1997, a judge for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, citing a pair of felony convictions, ordered DeLuca deported to Italy. DeLuca was born there and remains a citizen of that country. At DeLuca’s deportation hearing in Boston, an INS prosecutor cited DeLuca’s 1992 conviction for mail fraud and a 1977 extortion conviction as the basis for his deportation. DeLuca appealed the ruling. No final judgment has been reached on his deportation. The Providence Journal reported. DeLuca remains free on \$2,500 bail while the state attorney general’s office decides whether it will retry the case. In December 1999, authorities arrested DeLuca and Anthony M. “The Saint” St. Laurent and Rudolph “The Captain” Sciarra, charging them with participating in the gambling ring. Sixteen others were also arrested. St. Laurent, Sciarra and 16 others pleaded guilty or no contest to various criminal charges. DeLuca was the only defendant who chose to go to trial.

Former mortgage company owners sentenced for check scheme

East Greenwich, R.I. — Two former mortgage company operators were sentenced to federal prison in a corporate check-kiting scheme that defrauded two banks out of nearly \$1.4 million. Michael Marzocchi was sentenced on Friday to 33 months and Lorie Mercier to 37 months. They must also make restitution of nearly \$966,500 to a bank and an insurer. Marzocchi, of Safety Harbor, Florida, and Mercier, of Warwick, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bank fraud and conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service. Prosecutors said their companies, Diversified Mortgage Company, of East Greenwich, and Sunstate Mortgage Company, of Daytona, Fla., deposited worthless checks into various company bank accounts. The pair admitted they directed employees to make deposits to move nonexistent money among 19 company accounts at five banks.

‘Mama Jo,’ a figure in Rowland scandal, is from GOP old guard
 Manager of governor’s mansion to testify before grand jury

By DIANE SCARPONI
 Associated Press Writer

Hartford — Gov. John G. Rowland is the son Jo McKenzie never had.

McKenzie is best known for cutting a stylish, if daunting, figure around the Capitol as she manages the governor’s mansion, Rowland’s official parties and other social functions.

She has been active in Republican politics for most of her life, including a stint as chairwoman of the state Republican Party and 13 years on the Republican National Committee.

McKenzie, 71, who recently moved to Hartford from Madison, is known around the Capitol as “Mama Jo.”

She has been subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury that is looking into allegations of corruption in Rowland’s administration related to state contracts with the Tomasso Group companies of New Britain.

But she had not entered the public eye much — aside from an occasional mention in gossip columns — until Rowland listed her this month as one of several friends who were involved in renovations to his summer cottage in Litchfield.

Rowland at first claimed he had paid for all the work that was done to the cottage. But he later admitted that the Tomassos and some state employees, including McKenzie, had a role in the cottage work.

McKenzie, Rowland said, had “helped perform and/or coordinate work on the cottage.”

“She’s given us some friendly advice on the cottage,” Rowland said Friday.

Rowland also said he and his wife, Patricia, consider McKenzie a “close personal friend.”

Mrs. Rowland chided the media in a Christmas poem last week for writing stories that “embarrassed our children and our Mama

McKenzie.”

McKenzie said last week she was “not exactly sure” why she has been subpoenaed. She said she had suggested that a cathedral ceiling and a stepping stone be installed at the cottage.

‘I didn’t pay for anything’

“I didn’t coordinate anything with anybody at the cabin,” she told reporters. “I didn’t pay for anything. I have no intentions of paying for anything and I didn’t pay for anything. Can I be any clearer than that?”

McKenzie seemed offended at reporters’ questions last week and told a reporter “Don’t be fresh,” when he inquired whether the contractors that did work on Rowland’s home had done any work on her house, which is on the same street as the governor’s mansion.

She rebuffed several interview requests for this article.

“I don’t want to talk right now. It’s over for me,” McKenzie said Friday from her Capitol office.

Many people at the Capitol know McKenzie but few were willing to talk about her on the record. Some said they were afraid of getting on her bad side. Others said they did not want to kick her when she was down.

Even those who don’t know McKenzie know of her. She’s hard to miss: At the Capitol, where sober suits for men and women are the norm, McKenzie cuts a distinctive figure in oversized jewelry and glasses, bright wraps and a crown of short silver curls.

“There’s no question when Jo McKenzie enters a room, people pay attention to her,” said state Republican Chairman Herb Shephardson.

She is officially an employee of the state Department of Public Works, earning \$84,456 a year, state comptroller records show. She was hired in May 1995, a few months after the three-term governor first took office.

McKenzie is in charge of the

upkeep of the mansion, parties and other social events the governor hosts. She also helps Patricia Rowland with her schedule and events.

Among her social triumphs was the Millennium Ball for the year 2000 at the state Armory.

The design consultants for the party, Stingray Hornsby of Watertown, recalled that McKenzie worked hard on the party.

“She was most professional one involved in the whole thing. Everybody else was a bunch of amateurs,” said Ronald Mayne, a partner in Stingray Hornsby.

Her closeness to the Rowlands is seen in many public appearances. On Election Day in November 2002 McKenzie was right next to the governor and his wife at the ballot box.

A human shield

Rowland married Patricia Rowland, who had no experience in being a politician’s wife, 12 days after he won the 1994 election. Mrs. Rowland told The Hartford Courant last year that McKenzie is a “stand-in mom.”

“She’s a human shield for us, very protective of us. Both John and I hate to say no, and sometimes we overextend ourselves. She knows the fine line we walk between private life and public life,” she said.

McKenzie told the newspaper that Mrs. Rowland was like a daughter to her and that “John Rowland is the son I never had, and I don’t care who I say it to.”

The nickname “Mama Jo” came not from the Rowlands, but from children during a visit to Taipei years ago.

McKenzie has never held public elected office, but she was elected to the RNC, which has only two members — a man and a woman — from each state.

Fellow RNC member Charlie Glazer, a Greenwich businessman, said McKenzie is “universally well-liked.”



BOB CHILD / Associated Press

Jo McKenzie leaves a Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce breakfast in Cromwell Wednesday. McKenzie, a member of the Republican National Committee and staff director of the governor’s residence, has been subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury looking into allegations of corruption in Gov. John G. Rowland’s administration.

“She’s a friend of mine. I think she’s a good person. She works very hard in Republican politics,” Glazer said.

She has been a delegate to the Republican National Convention, and a member of committees for the election of both Bushes and numerous other Republican causes.

McKenzie has a talent for identifying young Republicans to run for public office or assist in campaigns, Shephardson said.

“She’s got an excellent, astute political mind,” he said.

She met her late husband, Robert Henry McKenzie, when they were teenagers. Together they owned two classy restaurants along the shoreline — Robert Hen-

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NOTICE CITY OF GROTON RESIDENTS
 CHRISTMAS DAY HOLIDAY
 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2003 - CLOSED

TRASH AND RECYCLING SCHEDULE

The City of Groton Municipal Offices and the Highway Department will be closed on Thursday, December 25, 2003 in observance of Christmas Day. Residents who have regular trash collection scheduled for Thursday will not be picked up. Trash will be picked up on the next scheduled day. Residents who have “Recycling” pickup scheduled for Thursday will be picked up on Friday, December 26, 2003. Please have your recycling out by 7:00 a.m. Highway Dept. 446-4127.

***** Reminders for City of Groton Residents *****
 *** Leaves **ARE NOT** to be swept in the street or road.***

A Winter Reminder: Please keep roadways clear during and immediately following a storm. Park off the road, whenever possible, to permit clear access for our plows. All property owners or occupants of land adjacent to a sidewalk have the responsibility to remove snow and ice from sidewalks. Together we can keep our roadways clear for everyone’s safety.

Wishing you Happy Holidays from your friends at the City of Groton!

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