

COLUMN ONE

Reluctant Hero Longs for His Past

■ John Thompson captivated the nation when his arms were reattached after a farm accident. Now, he is tired of celebrity and wishes folks would see he's no icon, just an ordinary guy.

By BARRY BEARAK
TIMES STAFF WRITER

HURDSFIELD, N.D.—This is the ghastly way a North Dakota farm boy became an American hero: While loading barley into a machine, he slipped on some ice. He tottered against a metal bar that was spinning in a blur parallel to the ground. His shirt was reeled in, then his hands. For a few seconds, his body was a human propeller, twirling head over heels. The force pried off his arms just below the shoulders and pitched the rest of him 20 feet away.

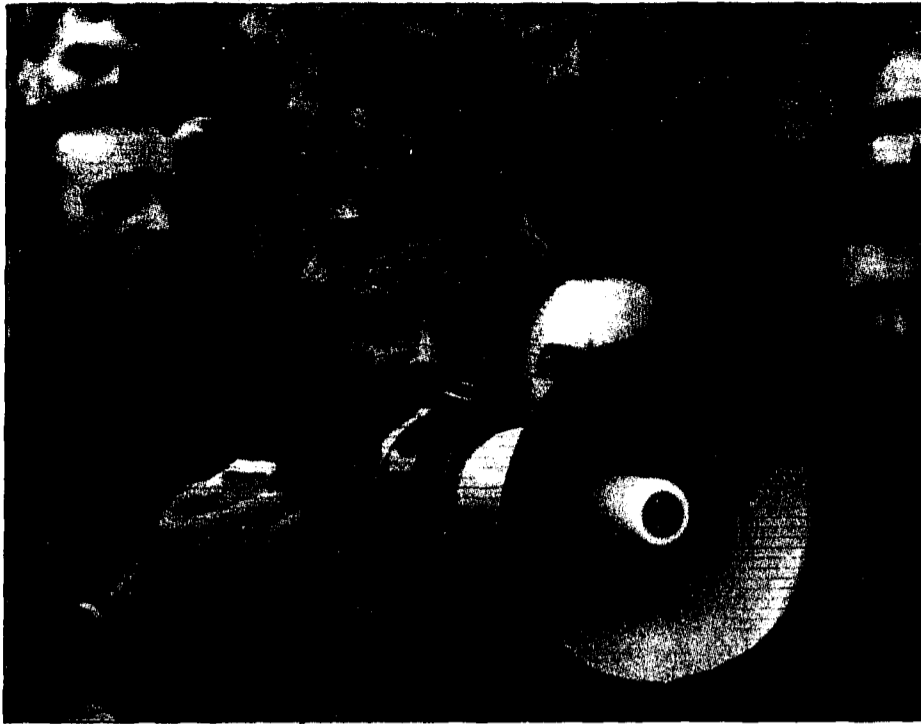
With his limbs suddenly gone, John Wayne Thompson glanced at his wounds. He staggered 100 yards to his house, turning the doorknob with his mouth. He phoned for help, punching in the numbers with a pen clenched between his teeth. Worrying what his mom might say about all the blood that was spotting the carpet, he crouched in the bathtub as he waited.

The ambulance crew found the missing arms. In a five-hour relay, 18-year-old Thompson and his appendages were taken by road and air from the farm here in Hurdsfield to a hospital in Minneapolis. He was placed in a pool of magnified light. Microsurgeons sorted among his severed parts, matching up the nerves and blood vessels and sewing them up with needles thinner than a human hair.

When the story hit the news last year, the teen-ager's reassembled body seemed to become a living icon.



User's Guide to the Health Plan
Today's editions of The Times include a special section called "Health Plan: A User's Guide," a look at the impact of President Clinton's reform plan on individuals, families, health providers and businesses. The section also features "Choices," a board game that takes players through the plan's options and how they may influence real-life situations.



Would-be president Alexander Rutskoi denounces President Boris Yeltsin in front of Parliament in Moscow.

Mexican Mafia Tells Gangs to Halt Drive-Bys

By ROBERT J. LOPEZ
and JESSE KATZ
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

In a dramatic show of muscle that has brought an uneasy calm to some of Los Angeles' most violent barrios, the Mexican Mafia prison gang has ordered thousands of Latino gang members to put a halt to drive-by shootings—or face the syndicate's deadly wrath.

The edict has been delivered over recent months at a series of tightly guarded meetings, including an afternoon summit on Sept. 18 attended by an estimated 1,000 or more gang members in Elysian Park, near Dodger Stadium. Under the new rules, gangs are still allowed to attack rivals with whom they have a personal beef, but they have been instructed to do it face-to-face, taking care not to harm bystanders.

"It was, like, this is for *la raza*, the Mexican people," said a gang member who attended the Elysian Park meeting. "If you have to take care of business, they were saying, at least do it with respect, do it with honor and dignity."

By using terror to impose some order on rivalries that were spiraling out of control, the Mexican Mafia has been credited with decelerating one of the bloodiest cycles in the long history of Mexican-American gangs. But in doing so, concerns have been raised about the influence of the clandestine organization, which is suspected of trying to use street gangs to expand its criminal enterprise outside the penal system.

"I'm all for peace, but what we're really looking at is the beginning of organized crime," said Lt. Sergio Robieto, commander of the Los Angeles Police Department's South Bureau homicide detail. "I just don't believe that a pact between people who are rapists, murderers and drug dealers is going to last."

Please see GANGS, A34

Showdown in Russia Dissipates Into Insults

■ Feud: Yeltsin calls foes' efforts 'a farce.' Would-be president Rutskoi remains isolated inside Parliament.

By RICHARD BOUDREAU
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MOSCOW—The historic showdown ignited five days ago when President Boris N. Yeltsin dissolved Russia's Parliament fizzled Saturday into an exchange of theatrical insults as many lawmakers left their besieged and barricaded headquarters and headed home.

The slow death of the Congress of People's Deputies moved the focus of resistance to Russia's regional legislatures, many of which are threatening to withhold taxes and block Yeltsin's plan for election of a new Parliament in December.

In Azerbaijan, Civilians Pay Price of War

By SONNI EFRON
TIMES STAFF WRITER

ZANGELAN, Azerbaijan—It looks as if war had come to California.

This besieged corner of southwestern Azerbaijan is a lovely land of tawny rolling hills and irrigated valleys thick with orchards and vineyards. Pomegranates grow by the side of the road, and on the southern side of the Araks River are the dusky purple mountains of Iran.

But refugees are camped at every crossroad. They have fled on tractors, in cattle and vegetable trucks, on motorcycles with sidecars heaped with dirty children, mattresses, bags of flour and odd bits of furniture. Some have herded their livestock to safety.

Please see AZERBAIJAN, A12

U.S. Denounces Attack, Reaffirms Somalia Mission

■ Policy: The Administration vows not to give in to 'brutality of warlords' after three Americans die when a helicopter is shot down in Mogadishu.

By MICHAEL ROSS, TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—The White House on Saturday condemned the deadly downing of a U.S. helicopter over Mogadishu but, anticipating new criticism from Capitol Hill, strongly reaffirmed its commitment to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Somalia.

The attack, in which three American airmen were killed when their Black Hawk helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade fired by a Somali gunman, underscores the need to re-establish security in Mogadishu to prevent the international humanitarian efforts from being undermined, White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said.

The helicopter's pilot and copilot survived the fiery crash-landing early Saturday, which drew jubilant Somali crowds who danced about the wreckage and, according to some reports, paraded pieces of flesh from the dead crewmen.

Myers said the Clinton Administration is determined to prevent the "brutality of warlords" from undermining the famine-stricken country's "substantial yet fragile progress" toward the restoration of law and order.

But the defensive tone of the statement suggested that it was intended less as a warning to the warlords than as an appeal to critics in Congress, where opposition to the Somalia mission is expected to accelerate into calls to bring U.S. forces home.

One senior lawmaker who has already criticized the mission, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.), renewed his call for a withdrawal of the U.S. troops in Somalia, now about 5,000.

"Having completed the original mission to feed the starving people of Somalia, it is time to withdraw our troops," Byrd said.

Please see SOMALIA, A11

Clinton to Tell U.N. His World Vision, U.S. Role

By DOYLE McMANUS
and JOHN M. BRODER
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

WASHINGTON—When President Clinton steps to the podium of the U.N. General Assembly on Monday morning, he will be forced to do something he has largely avoided during a frenetic eight months in office: outline his vision of the world and America's place in it.

Elected on a platform of domestic renewal, Clinton has deliberately spent less time on foreign policy than his predecessor, George Bush. A White House log of Clinton's telephone calls to foreign leaders shows an average of fewer than three a week; Bush often made more than that in a single morning.

"Like a lawyer who's interested in foreign affairs, [Clinton] loves talking about this stuff," a White House official said. "But it's not what he does for a living."

Now, however, prodded by some of his own aides, anxious allies abroad and, finally, his speaking tour, Clinton is expected to outline his vision of the world and America's place in it.

Please see CLINTON, A16



Somalis go through the wreckage of a U.S. helicopter in Mogadishu.

Democrats Pursue Social Gains Via Mandate Route

■ Government: With the Treasury broke, private sector is being targeted. A striking example is in health plan.

By RONALD BROWNSTEIN
TIMES POLITICAL WRITER

WASHINGTON—Squeezed between expansive ambitions and crimped resources, the Clinton Administration and Democrats in Congress are increasingly pursuing their social goals by seeking to mandate actions by the private sector.

The most vivid example is President Clinton's proposal that all employers be required to pay for health insurance for their workers. But ideas under discussion in the Administration and Congress extend well beyond that—requiring all companies to establish labor-management committees to monitor workplace safety, for example, and mandating that financial institutions such as insurance companies and mutual funds invest in blighted urban areas.

"Government has basically three ways of achieving social objectives," said Thomas E. Mann, director of governmental studies at Washington's Brookings Institution. "They can spend money to buy it. They can offer incentives by forgoing tax revenues. Or they can issue commands. Insofar as the Treasury is broke, that limits the first two options, and I think government is increasingly stuck with third option of issuing commands."

Alarmed business groups—especially groups representing small businesses—have been vocal in their opposition to the proposals. "We're not going to let the government take over our lives," says a spokesman for the National Federation of Independent Business. "We're not going to let the government take over our lives."

Please see MANDATES, A24

INSIDE TODAY'S TIMES

AID FOR SOUTH AFRICA
African National Congress President Nelson Mandela won a pledge for \$850 million in IMF aid, securing needed funds for South Africa. A10

AMTRAK DATA RECORDER
Investigators retrieved a data recorder that could pinpoint crucial information about events leading up to Amtrak's worst disaster. A26

SHAH LEADS UCLA
Sharmon Shah ran for 187 yards in 40 carries, and UCLA won its first football game of the season, beating Stanford, 28-25. C1

WEATHER: Sunny and warmer today and Monday. Mostly clear tonight. Civic Center low/high today: 62/92. Details: B2

■ TOP OF THE NEWS ON A2

A Murder 'So Senseless,' a Grief So Deep

■ Crime: Father of five is slain after confronting a man who had shot his dog.

By FAYE FIORE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Shootings are no unusual occurrence in this neighborhood south of USC. A couple of weeks ago, they found a body stuffed in a large, handmade bird cage behind one of the houses.

But there was something so terribly sad about this one. Transito Velado got out of bed Friday morning to discover someone had shot his blond German shepherd, Oso. When he walked across the street to investigate, the gunman shot him to death.

It was so early in the morning, the family was hardly awake. One minute, Mirian Velado was asleep in her bed; the next she was giving CPR to a husband dying on a plot



Mirian Velado hugs daughter Beatriz in front of their house.

of dead grass near 62nd Street and Menlo Avenue.

There was no robbery, no apparent motive. Just five children—17 months to 14 years—suddenly fatherless, a wife wailing with grief and a patch of blood on a neighbor's front lawn, covered by police with loose dirt.

By Saturday morning, family members and friends were trailing in and out of the house. "He loved dogs," a relative said. Oso lay under the family's car, his left front leg bandaged, panting in the unseasonable heat.

"It is so senseless" was all Velado's sister, Vilma Palacios, could say. "All he did was ask why they did this to his dog and the answer he got was a shot in the head."

Some of the younger children looked dazed. Beatriz, the eldest, composed herself long enough to describe her father to reporters. He was a 39-year-old security guard who came from El Salvador in 1982.

Please see MURDER, A29

AZERBAIJAN: 5 Years of War Results in Wave of Refugees

Continued from A1
up their cattle and come on foot. "The children are all sick, and some of our cattle have died also," said Zembrut Zainalova, 60, one of tens of thousands living in roadside tents and cardboard lean-tos about 25 miles west of the war zone. "We have no bread, we are getting no help at all. Winter is coming, where will we live?"

In the last three months, more than 200,000 Azerbaijanis have been driven from their homes as Armenian forces have surged out of the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh to shell, burn and loot cities and villages left defenseless by the near-collapse of the Azerbaijani army.

The Armenians from Karabakh, underdogs for most of the 5-year-old war, now control one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory, an area nearly the size of Connecticut. The captured land covers at least 4,800 square miles, stretching from the border of the republic of Armenia as far as 15 miles east of the Karabakh enclave and south to within a mile or two of the Iranian border.

Armenians and Azeris have been disputing ownership of the mostly Armenian-populated Karabakh since before 1920. The explosive issue resurfaced in 1988 when Armenian nationalists began lobbying the Soviet Union to have Karabakh decided to the Armenian republic.

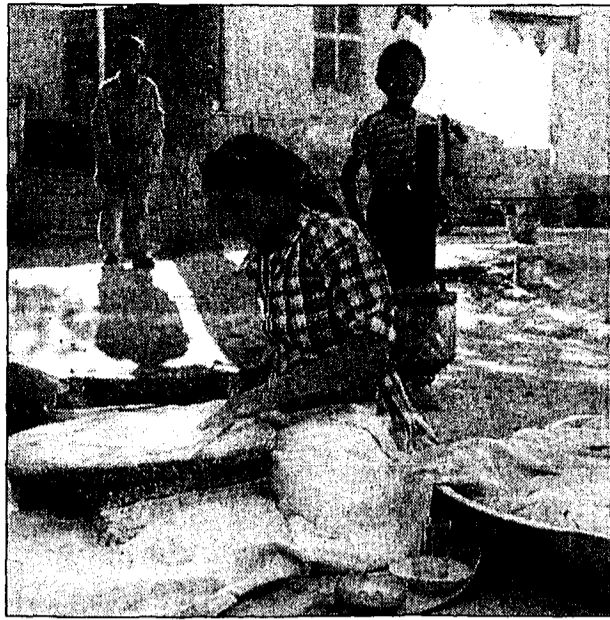
The ensuing ethnic clashes escalated into a full-scale war that has killed about 15,000 people and driven well over a million from their homes.

Officials in Karabakh insist that they are ready to hand back the seized Azerbaijani territory in return for peace with security guarantees. They say their offensive is aimed only at knocking out Azerbaijani artillery that had long terrorized their villages.

Feliks O. Mamikonian, Armenia's envoy to Moscow, said Karabakh officials launched the offensive after Azerbaijan ignored repeated warnings to move its heavy artillery 30 miles back, out of range of Karabakh's villages, but the Azerbaijanis have refused.

"For five years, Azerbaijan has been trying by military means—purely by military means—to kick all the Armenians out of Karabakh," Mamikonian said. "They wanted to annihilate the Armenians."

Azerbaijanis counter that the Armenian forces have gone far



An Azerbaijani refugee rolls dough in Zangelan as two boys watch.

beyond establishing an artillery-free "buffer zone" around Karabakh. They say the Armenians, with help from Russia, are trying to drive Azerbaijanis out of all of western Azerbaijan in order to annex their lands.

In an interview in May, a month before the current offensive began, a regimental commander in the Karabakh city of Shusha told *The Times*: "Our ultimate goal is to intimidate the Azeris to such an extent that they would never, ever think of imposing their rule on us again."

"Sheer demonstration of strength is the only method of solving our problem and attaining real and secure sovereignty," said the commander, who requested anonymity.

Azerbaijanis believe that the Armenians are plotting a land grab of historic proportions.

"Their plan is to create a Greater Armenia from the Black Sea to the Caspian," charged Irshad N. Aliyev, who heads the Azerbaijan state committee on refugees.

Whatever the truth, these days Azerbaijani civilians are doing most of the suffering. The Azerbaijani army that once rained shells and rockets down on Karabakh villages is reduced to a shambles

by the years of fighting, political strife, warlordism and corruption.

Commanders near the front lines say discipline and morale are at an all-time low. Conscripts are deserting with impunity, they say, while other soldiers simply turn tail and flee the battlefield.

"When two or three soldiers see one single tank, they prefer to run away and tell the commander there were five tanks," said a battalion commander at the eastern edge of the war zone.

"This is how the Armenians easily took the hills around Fizuli," one of the four major Azerbaijani towns that have fallen since June. The others are Agdam, Jibrayil and Kubatly.

Armenians have captured much of the equipment that Azerbaijan inherited from the old Soviet army. Azerbaijani supply lines have all but collapsed. Zangelan, located at the end of the 80-mile southern front, had no gasoline to move trucks earlier this month.

The wounded are also suffering from the army's logistic collapse.

A 20-year-old soldier shot recently through both legs was jounced screaming in pain over bad roads to a military hospital in Belagan, on the eastern edge of the war zone. Doctors said one shattered leg might require amputation



VICTOR KOTOWITZ / Los Angeles Times

without special surgery that could be performed only in Baku. But the next helicopter was not scheduled until the following day. By the next morning, the leg was growing cold.

Still, wounded soldiers get top priority. Civilian refugees say they have had to leave their wounded behind to die or be captured.

Shelling also hinders evacuation of the wounded. Pilots of the evacuation helicopters say they have been fired on not only by Armenians but also by Iranians when they flew too close to the border.

A cease-fire has been in effect since Aug. 30, but it has mostly been ignored. At least two Azerbaijani villages were captured and torched early this month, and both the Azerbaijanis and Armenians continue to report deaths and injuries from artillery attacks.

Faced with a rout, the government of Azerbaijan has turned to diplomacy, pinning its hopes on Russia. Azerbaijan's new leader, former Soviet Politburo member Geidar Aliyev, flew to Moscow earlier this month to forge closer political and economic ties. In a reversal of its former independent and pro-Turkish policies, Azerbaijan's Parliament voted last week to join the Russian-dominated Com-

monwealth of Independent States.

Aliyev also asked Moscow for Russian help in brokering a peace settlement—and, privately, some analysts believe, for Russian peacekeeping troops.

There followed a flurry of visits and telephone calls between Russian leaders and the leaders of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey and Iran, and a visit to the region by Strobe Talbott, President Clinton's ambassador-at-large to the former Soviet Union.

No concrete peace proposals have been made public. But the cease-fire has been extended through Oct. 5. And, on Saturday, Aliyev and Armenian President Levon A. Ter-Petrosyan met face to face for the first time in a closed-door meeting at the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow. No agreement was announced, but they emerged describing the meeting as important and useful.

So far it seems Moscow has succeeded not only in bringing the combatants to the peace table, but also in keeping its centuries-old rivals in the region, Iran and Turkey, from meddling in what it still considers its own back yard.

Iran fears a huge influx of Azerbaijani refugees and has begun

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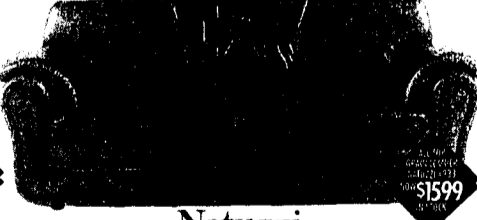
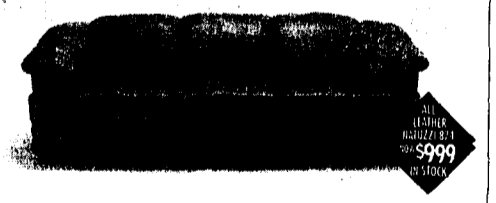
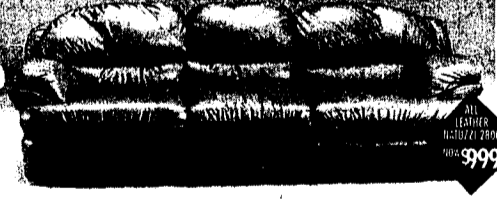
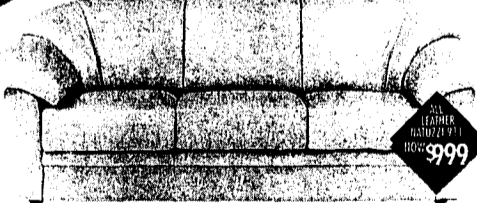
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AZERBAIJAN: Russian Effort May Not Solve Conflict

Continued from A12
 constructing camps inside Azerbaijan for up to 100,000 people—an unusual move, but one that Aliyev has welcomed. Turkey has warned that it will attack Armenia in response to any Armenian aggression against Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani enclave near the Turkish border.

Time is fast running out for Azerbaijan to find such a solution. Barely able to defend itself, the Azerbaijani army appears unable to prevent renewed Armenian attacks or evacuate civilians who have not already fled the war zone. Military officials acknowledge that

toward the Iranian border. With shells falling around them, the family ran about two miles south to the sandy banks of the Araks, a slow, muddy river that marks the border between Iran and Azerbaijan. Iranian border guards shouted over the river that women

to scare everyone away so they could take the land." Now Huseinova is living with about 500 other refugees in a middle school in Imishli, where about 20 classrooms are camped out in each classroom. Imishli, a town of 100,000, now has another 100,000 refugees, who are living in almost every school, rest home and hospital, and in other public buildings, officials say.

'Nagorno-Karabakh is ready to swap land, not for the promise of peace, but for real peace.'

FELIKS O. MAMIKONIAN, Armenia's envoy to Moscow

But since Moscow jumped into the diplomatic fray, officials in Iran and Turkey have grown quiet, allowing Russia, whose influence in the rich and tumultuous Caucasus had been waning, to flex its traditional muscle in the region once again. Peace, however, could prove elusive, in part because of Russia's own tumultuous domestic situation. And Armenia remains deeply skeptical that the Azerbaijanis want peace and not just time to regroup.

"Now they're in a bad position and they say, 'We're ready to have peace talks with you.' Would you trust such a person?" asked Mamikonian, Armenia's Moscow envoy.

Nevertheless, he said, "Nagorno-Karabakh is ready to swap land, not for the promise of peace, but for real peace. As soon as there is a mechanism for ensuring the peace, there will be no problem."

Armenian forces could easily cut the only road leading out of Zangezan, trapping more than 25,000 people in a potentially lethal bottleneck. The civilians who have already left say they only want to be able to return home.

One of the refugees, Jamila Huseinova, recently recounted her family's ordeal: She was at home in the village of Alhanli, a few miles north of the Iranian border, on the afternoon of Aug. 24 when an Armenian bombardment began. As neighbors' houses caught fire, Huseinova and her accountant husband managed to gather their four children and join the stream of terrified villagers running south

and children could cross as a last resort, Huseinova said, but that the men would have to stay behind.

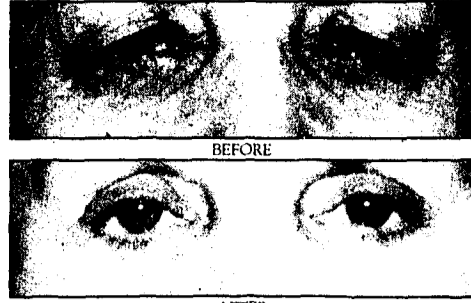
But Azerbaijani border guards refused to let anyone leave, she said.

Huseinova said panic-stricken villagers ran up and down the riverbank looking for missing children or parents. Some wounded were left behind; others disappeared, and it was unclear whether they were killed or captured.

Eventually, Huseinova's family walked for two days eastward along the Araks to Belagan, on the eastern edge of the war zone.

"The Armenians kept shelling, they never stopped," Huseinova said. "It seemed like they wanted

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