

# NewsWatch

## YOU SAID IT

Visitors to STLTodays.com's Talk of the Day blog had these thoughts about recent topics in the news:

### NO. 3 ON LIST OF MOST DANGEROUS:

◀ I live in the city, McKinley Heights-Soulard-Benton Park. I would not want to live anywhere else. I even moved here from Detroit, the second-worst crime city in the country.  
Joseph Lahti | St. Louis

◀ There are things St. Louis city proper could learn from larger cities to make it a safer place and more appealing to visitors — not just noted for its high crime rate.  
Charlotte Mahoney | Chicago (originally from St. Louis)

◀ I don't buy this for a minute. I was a countyite all my life. I relocated to the "city" 14 years ago. What a remarkable world of difference. I wish I had moved to the city 30 years ago.  
Bret De Rousse | St. Louis

◀ My husband and I recently moved from Philadelphia. There are few neighborhoods in Philly that weren't crime-ridden. We love St. Louis and all that it has to offer.  
Patrice Stanley | St. Louis

◀ I absolutely believe these statistics. ... However, from my perspective, neighborhood statistics mean little. Crime has followed me around the St. Louis area no matter what my ZIP code.  
Rachel Fuchs | Clayton

◀ I bet the cities who ranked the safest aren't saying that the study is false. I don't know why anyone is surprised. For the last five years we have always been in the top 10. Something is making St. Louis rank that way, and it isn't toasted ravioli.  
Chris Ferguson | St. Charles

### THEORIES ON JFK ASSASSINATION:

◀ If the official explanation were true, why wouldn't they release all the information pertaining to it? I don't pretend to know what happened that terrible day that President Kennedy was murdered; however, I am convinced that the official version of what happened is a lie.  
Lee Brotherton | Olivette

◀ ... It was the last step in a hostile takeover by what I call American Royalty — it also served notice to any future presidents that America is a sovereign nation in name only.  
Phillip Johnson | St. Louis

◀ Seven rounds in three seconds with a bolt action rifle? Try it. Yes, it can be done, but it is not likely you will score more than one hit. Oswald was a patsy and probably never fired a shot.  
Steve Long | Wood River

**STLTodays.com**  
Watch for this week's topics, and post your comments, online at [STLTodays.com/talkoftheday](http://STLTodays.com/talkoftheday).

**Chesterfield authorities think man was killed by his girlfriend.**  
The wife of a Jefferson City radio personality died after weeks of nausea.  
Police say they were ...

POISONED

If you think poisoning someone is an antiquated way of killing, think again

**Common poisons:**

**Strychnine**

- Colorless, bitter alkaloid used in rodent poison
- Horrifically painful symptoms begin 15 to 30 minutes after lethal dose
- Dramatic muscle convulsions lead to asphyxia and death

**Antifreeze**

- AKA ethylene glycol, has a sweet taste
- Kills thousands of dogs and cats each year
- Nontoxic propylene glycol is available
- Suspected in death of Jefferson City woman
- Kills in three steps:
  1. Victim appears drunk
  2. Irregular pulse/breathing
  3. Kidney failure

**Arsenic**

- A favorite poison since ancient times
- A tasteless semimetallic element on Periodic table
- Suspected of death of Chesterfield man
- Results in neurological damage and disruption of digestive system
- Fatal at 60 ppm in water
- High dose: Symptoms can occur within 30 minutes

Sources: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Washington State University, American Association of Poison Control Centers, Wikipedia.

26,435

2002 U.S. poisoning deaths

3,336

Poisoning deaths classified as "undetermined cause"

63

Classified as homicides

Difficult to detect

The number of undetermined poisoning deaths in 2002 shows how hard it can be to rule a poisoning as a homicide.

By Todd C. Frankel  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

When John H. Trestrail III updates his investigational guide "Criminal Poisoning," he plans to add "antifreeze" to the index.

Poisoning hasn't changed much over the centuries, says Trestrail. Arsenic remains the method of choice, just as it was in the murder of a Chesterfield man last year, a case in which police consulted with Trestrail.

But Trestrail has noticed an increasing number of cases of antifreeze poisoning in the last five years. "It's a pretty good weapon," said Trestrail, head of the Center for the Study of Criminal Poisoning in Battle Creek, Mich. "It's easy to find in the garage. It's good to put in a mixed drink."

Nearly three weeks ago, a Jefferson City radio talk show host was accused

of spiking his wife's Gatorade with antifreeze, also known as ethylene glycol. Julie Keown, 31, died in 2004 after months of complaining about dizziness and nausea. James Keown, also 31, who worked at KLIK-AM, was charged with first-degree murder. Prosecutors say he planned to spend a \$250,000 life insurance policy on a house and BMW convertible.

Homicidal poisoning is rare, but it is more common than the official statistics suggest, according to forensic toxicologists. And in those cases when it is discovered, it never fails to gain attention. Trestrail fields calls from not only law enforcement but also novelists, TV show writers and screenwriters seeking his expertise. Poisoning is not a crime of opportunity. It is premeditated. Poisoners are "very cool and deliberate about what they're doing," he says.

**Cases uncounted**

A study by the FBI found poisoning murders rose 18 percent from the 1980s to the 1990s, even as the overall number of murders fell by 8 percent. Still, the FBI counted just 346 fatal poisonings among the nation's 187,000 homicides from 1990 through 1999, in the most recent data available.

But Trestrail and other forensic toxicologists think those numbers are low. "I think we miss most of them," Trestrail says. He points to the number of poisoning cases that are discovered only after a body is exhumed. "There must be many more out there."

Trestrail's contention appears to be supported by data from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. There were 26,435 poisoning

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## Prewar intelligence

# White House effort to limit Iraq debate gets mixed review

**Some experts say: The move is needed to counterbalance charges that the threat posed by Saddam was exaggerated.**

**Others say: The only way to regain Americans' support for the war is to level with them about the past.**

By Philip Dine  
POST-DISPATCH WASHINGTON BUREAU

**WASHINGTON** • In encouraging a debate about Iraq policy while seeking to exclude the issue of prewar intelligence, the administration is taking on a delicate task that may prove difficult to sustain — and that could even backfire.

Vice President Dick Cheney made the administration's point most forcefully last week, when he termed "reprehensible, shameless and dishonest" any suggestion that the White House misrepresented intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to press the case for war.

It is "corrupt" and "not legitimate" to raise the issue, Cheney

said in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute. President George W. Bush has also sought to discourage discussion that there was an attempt to misrepresent prewar intelligence.

This White House effort is drawing mixed reactions from experts:

Some maintain it is necessary and overdue because Democrats are trying to rewrite history by accusing the administration of exaggerating prewar intelligence.

Others contend it represents a continuing attempt by the administration to mislead the public, and is counterproductive because the only way to get Americans to once again support U.S. policy in Iraq is to finally level with them.

A few say that, right or wrong, the White House effort is pointless because no administration official can set limits on what Americans or their representatives talk about. Case in point: The Senate Intelligence Committee is investigating the very topic of how the administration used prewar intelligence.

"It's silly to tell the American people what they can debate. They are going to debate whatever they want," said James Carafano, military expert at the Heritage Foundation. "That's how democracies go to war, how they fight. We're still debating the Civil War."

Carafano, a 25-year Army veteran, also dismisses the administration's claim that such talk

hurts troop morale.

"I think the notion that it undercuts the American will to fight is clearly overblown. That's a myth that comes from Vietnam," he said.

At the same time, Carafano agrees with Cheney that the administration is "being picked on unfairly" by its critics over the issue of prewar intelligence.

"It's people playing fast and loose with history. It's not a productive debate," Carafano said. "Nobody cares about this issue. The Europeans are more worried about Iraq crumbling than how we got into the war, the Iraqis don't care — they just don't want to give the country back to

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