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VALLEY

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Gabriel Pimentel of Pacoima, who stands 2½ feet tall, has cartilage-hair hypoplasia.

Actor Shows Pupils What Stature Means

By CLAUDIA PUIG, Times Staff Writer

Last year, while still in first grade at Telfair Elementary in Pacoima, 8-year-old Gabriel Pimentel told his mother that he didn't want to go to school anymore.

The 2½-foot-tall Pacoima boy complained that his schoolmates treated him as if he were a toy. Some would pick him up and try to throw him. Others would pat him on the head or tease him about going to work in the circus.

And the abuse has continued for Gabriel, now in the second grade, who has fought back by kicking and hitting, said John Hall, his school counselor. Sometimes, Gabriel has felt lonely and confused, said his mother, Maria Vega. And his school attendance has suffered.

But, on Wednesday, a beaming Gabriel—who stands a foot shorter than his fellow classmates—said he felt like a movie star. He seemed to have forgotten about the taunts and basked in the glory of his new-found friend, actor Billy Barty.

Barty, a well-known television and screen actor-comedian, had come to the school for National Handicap Awareness Week to talk about what it is like to be little.

"Little people are just like everybody else," said Barty, who stands 3 feet, 9 inches. "Because they're small, we shouldn't pat them on the head and baby them."

Barty, who founded Little People of America in 1957, spoke at the school at Hall's request. **See BARTY, Page 12**



Actor Billy Barty, with 8-year-old Gabriel Pimentel at his side, talks to Telfair School students.

Champions of Cityhood Say Mailings of Foes Backfired

By MAYERNE BARKER, Times Staff Writer

A last-minute deluge of anti-cityhood mailings by developer-backed groups backfired and caused voters to turn out in larger-than-expected numbers to cast ballots for the new City of Santa Clarita, cityhood proponents said Wednesday.

"I think the people were just fed up with outside money being spent against them," said Howard F. (Buck) McKeon, the top vote-getter among a field of 25 City Council candidates on Tuesday's ballot. "It just made them mad."

"I think the developers might have won this for us," said Carl Boyer III, who was also elected to the five-member council. "They forced the people to think about cityhood."

69% Favor Cityhood

Voters in the 40-square-mile area approved the new city by more than 2 to 1—14,416 to 6,474—giving the cityhood measure 69% of the votes cast. Santa Clarita includes the communities of Newhall, Saugus, Valencia and most of Canyon Country.

Voter turnout in Santa Clarita was about 45%, contrasted with the Los Angeles County average of less than 15%.

McKeon, 45, a clothing-store owner, Jan Heidt, 48, a community activist and bookstore owner, JoAnne Darcy, 56, County Supervisor Mike Antonovich's field deputy, Boyer, 49, a San Fernando High School government teacher, and Dennis M. Koontz, 47, a retired Los Angeles City Fire Department captain, were elected to the council.

In a related ballot measure, voters decided that they want future council members to be elected at-large, as they were Tuesday. Boyer and Koontz, who received fewer votes than the other council members, will face reelection in two years, whereas McKeon, Heidt and Darcy will serve four-year terms.

Council members will be sworn in at the first meeting after election results are certified in early December.

The large voter turnout and widespread breakdowns in voting equipment caused election results to come in slowly. Hundreds of cheering residents who attended a

See CITYHOOD, Page 10

Jury Convicts Man Dubbed 'Pack Rat' by L.A. Officials

By JANE HULSE, Times Staff Writer

After a five-week trial, the man authorities have called Los Angeles' "worst pack rat" has been found guilty of a series of offenses that began one August night in his neighbor's backyard and ended shortly afterward at the North Hollywood police station.

A Van Nuys Municipal Court jury late Monday found Don Hyatt Martin guilty of resisting arrest, battery on a custodial officer, assault on a custodial officer, destruction of city property, trespassing and loitering.

Martin, who acted as his own lawyer, was acquitted by the jury of assaulting a police officer and vandalism.

Martin was arrested Aug. 27 by Los Angeles police after he was spotted after dark in his next-door neighbor's backyard in the 11000 block of Hatters Street in North Hollywood. The neighbor, Mario Fineda, was a key witness against Martin in one of several nuisance cases the city brought against him for storing junk on his many properties.

According to a police report, Martin became belligerent at the police station when officers tried to obtain his fingerprints. The report said he threw one officer into a table, then heaved a typewriter at him, just missing his head. Finally, it said, officers had to subdue him with a tranquilizer from a dart gun to obtain fingerprints.

Martin will be sentenced Nov. 20 by Municipal Judge Isabel R. Cohen.

Deputy City Atty. John C. Roche said Martin has five separate nuisance cases still pending in Municipal Court, stemming from the storage of junk on his properties, most of them in the San Fernando Valley.

Martin had been dubbed the city's worst pack rat by health, safety and fire inspectors.

L.A. OKs Matching Loan to Back Alley

By RICHIE SIMON, Times Staff Writer

A \$2.1-million plan to restore the historic Van Nuys Post Office for use as a theater has been given a boost with a \$400,000 loan from the City of Los Angeles.

The City Council on Tuesday approved the loan to help the Back Alley Theatre buy, renovate and expand the vacant building at 14530 Sylvan St. into a 368-seat proscenium theater.

The loan is contingent on the theater group raising about \$1.1 million within one year. The nonprofit group already has raised more than \$300,000, according to Parker Anderson, director of industrial and commercial development for the city's Community Development Department.

"In effect, what we've made is a challenge loan," Anderson said.

The group cannot count a \$100,000 grant the state

recently awarded for the project as part of the \$1.1 million.

The Back Alley Theatre operates a 93-seat playhouse in a converted warehouse on Burbank Boulevard. The facility "does not allow for full expansion of the artistic vision of the artists associated with the theater, nor sufficient income to support equitable salaries for artists and administrators," according to a letter sent by the group to the council.

Built in 1935

The old post office, built in 1935, is one of the few examples in the San Fernando Valley of the distinctive architectural style often used by the Works Progress Administration, a federal agency that used construction projects to create jobs during the Depression.

It has been declared a historic landmark by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission.

The city is lending money for the project under a modern-day jobs program.

A Community Development Department report recommending the loan says the project will create 44 jobs.

The report also says the project will greatly boost efforts to revitalize the Van Nuys business district.

Laura Zucker, producing director of the Back Alley Theatre, said she would not answer questions about the project "until we are sure it is going forward."

An agreement between the city and the theater group that spells out the conditions of the loan must go back to the council and then to Mayor Tom Bradley for final approval.