



# THE VANCOUVER SUN

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

## Gene-modified blood cells attack cancer

BY JOI PRECIPHS

WASHINGTON — Scientists for the first time have successfully used gene therapy to fight cancer, altering the body's immune system so it would attack and destroy the deadliest skin tumours.

Two of 17 patients with advanced melanoma treated in a study were free of cancer more than 18 months after therapy began, says a report posted today on the online edition of the journal *Science*. More than 8,000 people in North America will die from melanoma this year, according to the American Cancer Society.

"Given all the hype of gene therapy over the years, this is one of the first that has the potential to be applied to common cancers," said Steven Rosenberg, the lead researcher and chief of surgery at the National Cancer Institute.

Historically, gene therapy has been targeted at inherited diseases, in which mutations in DNA impaired the body's natural function.


The efforts have mainly been directed at replacing or repairing defective genes. Rosenberg's findings offer an opportunity to use gene therapy against a more widespread and complex opponent, cancer.

Rosenberg and colleagues at the Bethesda, Maryland-based institute took infection-fighting white blood cells called T-cells from the patients and modified them so they would produce a protein receptor that helped them latch onto the tumours. The protein, known as a T-cell receptor, then activated the white blood cells to kill the cancer.

It is not yet clear why the treatment didn't help all the patients in the study.

See **LONG-TERM** A6

### INSIDE

	Arts & Life	D1
	At Home	C1
	Births & Deaths	H10
	Daphne Bramham	B1
	Bridge	H12
	Business	H1
	Classified	E9
	Comics	H9
	Crossword D9, E2, H12	
	Driving	E1
	Editorials/Letters	A10
	Ferry Schedule	H12
	Shelley Fralic	Cl, D10
	Horoscope	D9
	Issues/Ideas	All
	Letters	A10
	Movies	D11
	Sports	G1
	Sudoku	H9
	Barbara Yaffe	All

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# MANHUNT ENDS B.C. COLD CASE



COURTESY OF PLANO POLICE DEPARTMENT  
Jerry Ambrozuk was arrested Wednesday by police in Plano, Texas.

24 years after a mysterious plane crash killed a Vancouver woman, Texas police arrest her boyfriend — the pilot — who vanished from the scene  
**News, A3**

## Western housing market 'vulnerable'

Price gains in Calgary and Vancouver are unsustainable over the long term, TD Bank says

BY ERIC BEAUCHESNE

The Vancouver housing market is vulnerable to "significant moderation" because recent price increases are not sustainable, according to the co-author of TD Bank's latest national housing market report.

"The recent dramatic price gains in Calgary and Vancouver are unsustainable over the long term, and both cities are vulner-

able to significant moderation," bank deputy chief economist Craig Alexander said Thursday.

The report noted it remains a seller's market in Vancouver, even though the demand for housing has softened this year, with sales flat or negative in six of the past seven months. It said the price of an average resale house in Greater Vancouver has passed the \$500,000 mark, and home ownership costs have

climbed to about 50 per cent of household income.

"The recent trend towards weaker unit sales and rising listings is a positive development that might augur for a soft landing if it continues," the report said. "Close monitoring of this market is clearly called for."

CMHC senior market analyst Cameron Muir said the report's message echoes what he has been saying — that recent house-

price increases and mortgage-rate hikes have combined to reduce affordability, which has dampened sales.

"It would not be a surprise to see house prices fall by a few percentage points a year for a number of years until incomes and affordability grow to pick up demand," he said in an interview. "But we won't see a situation like 1982, when prices fell by 40 per cent, because we don't have the

super-high inflation and 20-per-cent mortgages they had back then."

The bank report said housing prices in most parts of Canada never reached the "bubble" stage that they did in U.S. cities, and as such should not go from boom to bust as is happening there.

Canadian housing markets have been booming in recent

See **OTHER CANADIAN** A3

## Drought-hit Tofino stays afloat after agreeing to truck in water

BY DARAH HANSEN  
VANCOUVER SUN

TOFINO — The drought-stricken town of Tofino will remain open for business today and, if all goes well, throughout September after the mayor and council agreed to a tentative plan to truck water in from neighbouring Ucluelet in order to top up the municipality's own dwindling supply.

The 11th-hour proposal — which has yet to receive approval from the provincial Ministry of Health — came during a raucous emergency council meeting held Thursday afternoon at the town hall, where worried business owners and residents gathered to demand a solution to the water crisis.

Under the plan, as much as 200,000 gallons of municipal water from Ucluelet's abundant

aquifer will be trucked into Tofino daily and pumped into its municipal tanks via its fire hydrants.

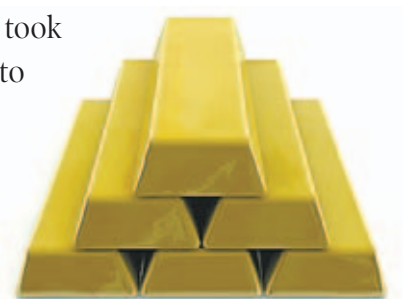
Combined with what's left of Tofino's own beleaguered reserves, the level of water should be enough to keep the town — and its many seaside resorts, restaurants, surf shops and art galleries — in operation

See **TRUCKED** A2

## A golden opportunity

Goldcorp Inc.'s \$8.6-billion takeover of Glamis Gold Ltd. will create the world's fifth largest gold producer. Goldcorp CEO Ian Telfer tells *The Sun* that the move, which took two months to bring to fruition, came as a surprise opportunity for both companies.

**BUSINESS BC, H1**





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Aug. 23, 1982

Sept. 9, 1982

Sept. 18, 1982

**Montana police continue hunt for missing pilot**

**Burned radio adds to missing plane mystery**

**Body of Vancouver girl recovered from U.S. lake**

# Under arrest — after 24 years

Man from B.C. arrested in Texas after newspaper story on unsolved crimes

BY RANDY BOSWELL and CHAD SKELTON

A B.C. man who vanished 24 years ago after the death of his girlfriend in a mysterious Montana plane crash has been arrested in an affluent suburb of Dallas — exposed because he violated a watering ban and because of a newspaper story on Montana's most sensational unsolved crimes.

Jerry Ambrozuk — who disappeared after the August 1982 crash that killed 18-year-old Dianne Babcock of Vancouver — escaped from the rented plane he was piloting before it sank in Little Bitterroot Lake in northwest Montana.

Investigators at the time concluded that the crash was likely planned and that Ambrozuk had made little effort to save Babcock's life.

Ambrozuk, then 19, the Polish-born son of immigrants in Vancouver, fled and did not report the crash.

The only clues pointing to his location were two phone calls from New York City to a B.C. friend several days after Babcock's death, a third call from Dallas a few weeks later, and a Texas postcard mailed to his parents that Christmas.

Ambrozuk told the friend he'd been unable to free Babcock from her seat-belt when the plane hit the water.

But after swimming to shore and spending the night by a campfire, he fled without contacting authorities and turned up days later in New York.

Nearly a quarter of a century after police in Canada and the U.S. began searching for Ambrozuk — a three-time target of the TV show *America's Most Wanted* — the hunt ended Wednesday at his home in Plano, Texas, one of the richest cities in the U.S.

Investigators arrested a 43-year-old man calling himself Michael Lee Smith, who quickly admitted his true identity and who now faces extradition to Montana to face a charge of negligent homicide.

"Yes, we have him; yes, he's in jail, and, yes, it's Ambrozuk," said Plano police spokesman Rick McDonald.

On Thursday, *CanWest News Service* contacted Ambrozuk's parents and sister in Burnaby and told the family about his arrest.



Dianne Babcock's body was recovered from an airplane that sank in a remote Montana lake in August, 1982. She was 18 when she died. Her boyfriend, Jerry Ambrozuk, who was flying the plane, was wanted by police for negligent homicide. But, he was never tracked down — until now, thanks to an anonymous tip.



On Monday, an unnamed woman contacted police in Montana to say she had seen the article and believed Ambrozuk was in Plano.

In Montana, Det.-Sgt. Pat Walsh said Ambrozuk had apparently begun revealing his true identity to people.

But confirming that the man in Plano was Ambrozuk was not easy, said Walsh.

Because the crashed Cessna was submerged in water, police were never able to lift any fingerprints from it. And Ambrozuk had never been fingerprinted in Canada.

That's why he was not linked to the crash in 1983 when he was arrested and fingerprinted under the name Smith for breaking into a car in Dallas.

Walsh said investigators e-mailed a picture of the man they thought was Ambrozuk to Babcock's father in Burnaby — who showed it to Dianne's sister, who knew Ambrozuk well.

She was certain it was the same man, said Walsh.

That information was passed to Plano police and, equipped with an address given by the tipster, the next day they visited a home in the city's exclusive Russell Creek Estates.

A \$100,000 Dodge Viper sports car was parked in the driveway. A violation notice from the city's water department was posted on the front door but no one answered the police officer's knock.

A second visit was made on Wednesday to no avail. The third time, when it was noticed that the ticket had been removed from the front door, the officers decided to pose as workers from the water commission.

"When they said they were from the water department, he opened the door right away," said McDonald. "Very, very nice home. Very, very nice car. Our tax records show he's been there since 2000. He lived there alone, kind of a weird thing."

*CanWest News Service with The Vancouver Sun*

"Where is he? What name is he using?" his father, Ted, shrieked at the news. "We're shocked, but we're happy," said Ambrozuk's 38-year-old sister, Renate Wierzbicki.

Wierzbicki was 14 when her brother disappeared in 1982 and left countless questions for his and Babcock's families, as well as two generations of Montana homicide investigators.

"I'm very offended that we hadn't even heard about this arrest," said Wierzbicki, adding that family members would be flying to Texas today.

A relative of Babcock, contacted in Trail, declined to comment, and a message left for Babcock's father, who lives in Burnaby, was not returned.

Ambrozuk, a qualified pilot, had rented a Cessna 150 and filed a flight plan for Aug. 22 from Penticton to Vancouver.

It was later discovered that Ambrozuk and Babcock had also asked about flights between Penticton and Kalispell, Mont., and when the couple

left on their supposed trip to Vancouver, they instead veered south across the U.S. border and over Montana's northwest wilderness.

State police officials, who were later contacted by Ambrozuk's B.C. friend about the phone calls from New York, searched Little Bitterroot Lake with sonar devices and found the sunken aircraft. Babcock's body was still strapped in the passenger seat.

Her long blond hair spilled from a cockpit window as divers raised the Cessna, and inside they found a hair-dyeing kit that raised suspicions she was planning to alter her identity.

Police also found charred remnants of aircraft communication equipment in a lakeside campfire. Detectives surmised it had been removed from the plane to prevent any signal from helping pinpoint the site.

A continent-wide arrest warrant was issued for Ambrozuk, but years passed without a hint of where he'd gone. Tele-

vision appeals produced tips but no solid leads. In December 2000, as part of a series about famous B.C. cold cases, *The Vancouver Sun* ran a front page story wondering: "Where is Jerry Ambrozuk?"

Last year, *The Daily Inter Lake* newspaper in Kalispell ran a similar story recounting Babcock's mysterious death.

The story quoted Montana Sheriff Jim Dupont, one of the original investigators in the case, who said: "He didn't do a hell of a lot to help her get out of the airplane. She wasn't injured to the point she couldn't get out of the aircraft. Why wouldn't he help her out?"

Dupont noted that cash and other items had apparently been retrieved from the plane before it sank.

"I wish I could talk to Ambrozuk and find out what happened during those few minutes in the water."

*The Daily Inter Lake* story was posted on the paper's website.

## Other Canadian markets more balanced, report says

From A1

years with extremely high starts, sales and price gains in many markets, but have generally lacked the degree of speculation that dominated past boom-bust cycles, it said. And the excesses here have been far less than those in the U.S.

"The other major Canadian real estate markets appear to be in much more balanced shape and housing activity in Central and Atlantic Canada has already cooled without prompting a price correction — supporting the view that a bubble never formed in these regions."

The analysis was released as the Canadian real estate industry was confirming earlier reports of a widespread slowdown in home sales in July, led by declines in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario.

National home sales fell 3.1 per cent in July to 39,319, the Canadian Real Estate Association said. Sales fell in all provinces other than Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

But, it added that the Canadian housing markets were merely returning to more balanced conditions thanks to an increase in homes for sale, which has left the housing market more balanced than it has been in 15 years.

Still, the average price of a Canadian home sold in July was \$277,189, 10.6 per cent higher than a year earlier, at record highs for any month in Quebec and Newfoundland, and at record highs for July in all provinces.

While price increases moderated in July, it was the seventh straight month that the average price has been more than 10 per cent higher than a year earlier and all western provinces other than Saskatchewan posted double-digit gains. Alberta led the pack, with prices up 32.5 per cent. "Prices are expected to contin-



STEVE BOSCH/VANCOUVER SUN

Dramatic price gains in Vancouver cannot be sustained over the long run, according to a TD Bank report.

ue to rise at a more normal pace over the rest of the year," said real estate association chief economist Gregory Klump, adding that demand for homes remains strong and that the slowdown in the U.S. economy will also help keep interest rates here steady or possibly even lead to lower rates, which is good for housing.

Most analysts agree that interest rates here will not be rising further, a view that was reinforced by news Thursday of weaker-than-expected growth in the Canadian economy during the spring quarter.

The TD Bank noted in its analysis that the housing markets in Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa were cooling or had already cooled, and were also becoming more balanced in most other cities, other than Calgary and possibly Edmonton.

"Although the Calgary housing

market has begun to open up with a substantial increase in new listings in June and July, it remains a seller's market, particularly for new homes," it said.

"Given that the market is overheated at the moment, a bubble may be forming, or could easily develop, but the hope is that the trend towards a more balanced market continues."

Ditto, for Edmonton, it said. "The strength in the real estate market is supported by economic fundamentals, but prices cannot continue to go up at their recent rate indefinitely," it said. "If the pace doesn't soften, a bubble could form."

*CanWest News Service with file from The Vancouver Sun*

Vaughn Palmer is on vacation

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