



MARK NAYMIK

Ohio Democratic leaders seem to want to pull up the blanket and avoid the county reform issue. **Column, B7**

PHILIP MORRIS



A cold shadow falls on our parks

The mood of the Cleveland Metroparks, a nationally heralded urban park system, has recently changed. The parks seem less friendly.

In recent days, the more than 21,000 acres of parkland have gone from tranquil places of care-free abandon to places where passing strangers are eyed with caution.

Dog walkers and runners now greet each other with a bit more uncertainty.

Hikers saddled with book bags are no longer encouraged by passers-by with verbal support. They're simply watched.

A murder has a way of warping good history.

For years, I've spent several hours a week in one of the parks running or doing calisthenics. But since the May 10 attack on Chevonne Ecclestone, a 52-year-old woman who was beaten on the head with a rock while walking her dog in a Parma Metropark, I've noticed a distinct temperature change. It seems colder.

Ecclestone died last week after lingering in a coma for more than two weeks. Police say career felon Todd Torok of Parma attacked and robbed Ecclestone as she walked her poodle.

The unprovoked attack, one of the most cowardly in recent local memory, was an assault on any of the 42 million annual visitors to the parks.

Only the wrong person suffered and died. I wish Ecclestone had had a gun.

The senseless violence shattered the shroud of comfort, familiarity and safety that has long been associated with the park system. The parks have temporarily, at least, become less friendly to a community of strangers.

Two concerns continue to dog my thoughts as I wonder how the attack will affect the future of the lush system often referred to as Cleveland's "emerald necklace."

Will fewer children, young professionals and aging seniors make use of one of the best-maintained and most creatively marketed park resources in the nation?

And will more of those who use the park feel the need to carry weapons with them onto park grounds?

Under current Ohio law, registered gun owners with concealed-carry permits are free to bring their weapons onto Metroparks grounds. Will more gun owners now feel the need to arm themselves in the parks?

"We need the public's help as much as they need ours," said William Ryan, president of the Cleveland Metroparks Board of Commissioners. "If the public sees something that doesn't look right, all they have to do is get on the phone to one of our ranger

Game makers fight state in court

Say Dann's raid on Tic-Tac-Fruit violated order

REGINALD FIELDS
AND AARON MARSHALL
Plain Dealer Bureau

COLUMBUS — Game machine makers who feel betrayed by former Attorney General Marc Dann have filed a contempt motion against the state that

could cost Ohio taxpayers.

Ohio Skill Games and other game makers accuse the attorney general's office under Dann of orchestrating a police task force raid on the popular coin-operated games in 2007 — just before they were outlawed — despite a pair of orders from a judge barring the action.

"The attorney general specifically authorized the task force to violate the court's order, despite the court's clear written and oral mandates to the contrary," reads

a motion filed before Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Michael Holbrook, who had issued the orders.

The motion, which seeks legal fees from the state, names as defendants the attorney general's office under Dann, the Ohio Department of Public Safety and Columbus police officer Lisa Smith, a task force member.

Dann chaired the Ohio Organized Crime Investigation Commission, which Columbus attorney

William Meeks said led the task force involved in the raid on Tic-Tac-Fruit games and others in October. Holbrook had blocked the state from seizing the games until it was clear whether they were illegal.

The attorney general's office on Monday said it was aware of the motion and was not yet ready to respond.

The plaintiffs include Jay Young, who ran Ohio Skill Games, maker of Tic-Tac-Fruit; game operator Jeff Mayle of

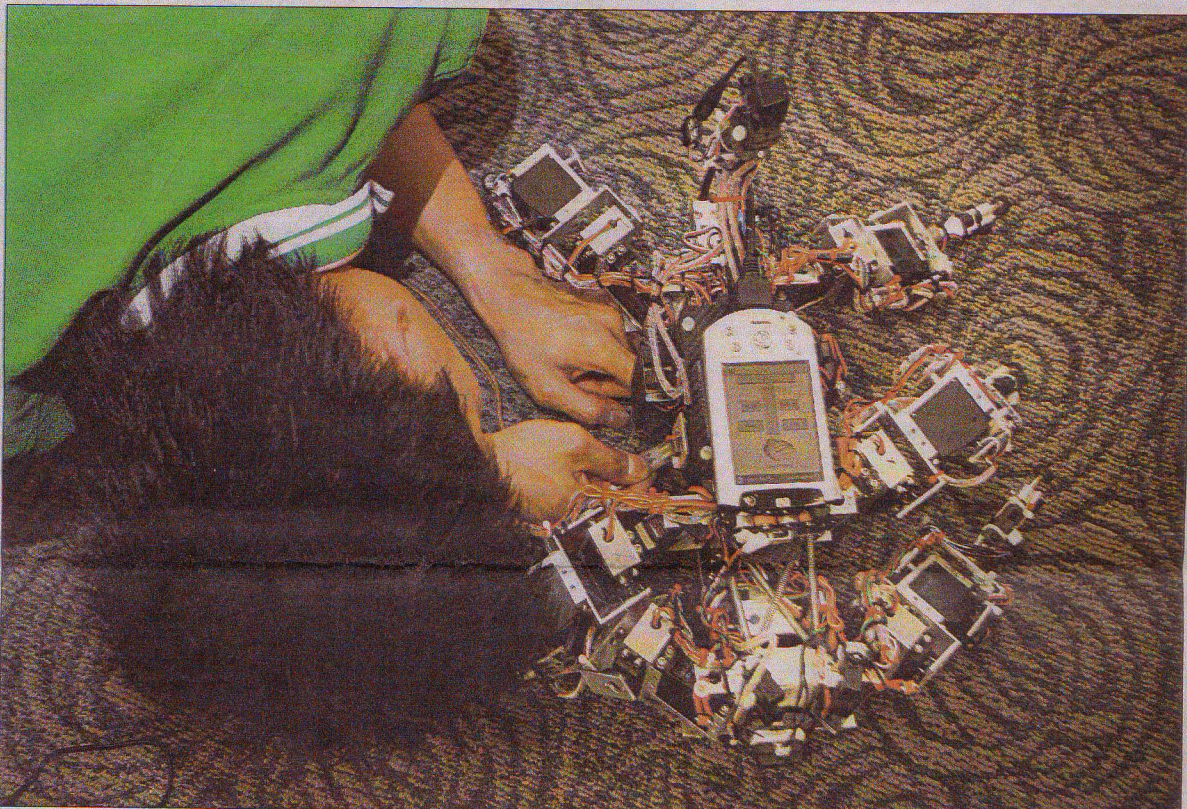
Columbus; and Elite Entertainment Inc. of Akron.

Meeks, who represents the plaintiffs, hopes that Holbrook agrees to hold a hearing to force the attorney general's office to explain why authorities raided businesses owned by Young and others despite Holbrook's orders.

Holbrook's office on Monday said it had not yet decided whether to hold a hearing.

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Building robots with nature's blueprints



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS STEPHENS | THE PLAIN DEALER

Dr. Poramente Manoonpong of the University of Goettingen in Germany works on his six-legged robot inspired by a cockroach during a demonstration Monday afternoon at Case Western Reserve University. The university is hosting the fourth International Symposium on Adaptive Motion of Animals and Machines.

Machines symposium at Case looks to animals as inspiration

JAMES EWINGER
Plain Dealer Reporter

giving researchers in the natural sciences a better understanding of the animals that inspired them.

Imagine a headless pack mule that eats fossil fuels, a metal spider running over land and water, or a radio-controlled moth orbiting a light bulb.

Dozens of men and women who have already imagined these things — and made them — are at Case Western Reserve University this week for the fourth International Symposium on Adaptive Motion of Animals and Machines.

Living creatures are showing engineers a better way to build machines. These mechanical creatures, in turn, are

Roger Quinn, director of Case's Robotics Lab and co-chairman of the symposium, said the small robots can explore hostile environments, from volcanoes and collapsed mines to mine fields.

Robotic innovations also can replace missing limbs or help to rehabilitate stroke victims by exercising or assisting muscles, Quinn said. On Monday, images were shown of a live moth with a clipped wing to explain how the creature can compensate for the impediment.

SEE ROBOTICS | B3



Alexander Boxerbaum, a researcher at Case Western Reserve University, snaps a picture of one of Case's cockroach-inspired robots as it tries to crawl over a mechanized yellow salamander, created in France.

What's open to the public

The symposium on adaptive motion of animals and machines at Case Western Reserve University this week is closed to the public.