

TOP OF THE NEWS

World/Nation

» **Sanctions:** The Vatican issues its first known application of new sex abuse norms against a Belgian priest. **A2**

» **Japan:** Authorities are on the defensive — did they delay or block information about radioactive contamination? **A4**

» **NPR:** A huge victory for public broadcasters — funding stays essentially the same. **A5**

» **Civil War:** Commemorating the 150th anniversary of the start of the war. **A7**

Bay Area

» **Serial killer?** Man, 77, is held in Marin in slayings of women over three decades. **C1**

» **Matier & Ross:** 49ers fire radio commentator after spread of tawdry podcast. **C1**

Business Report

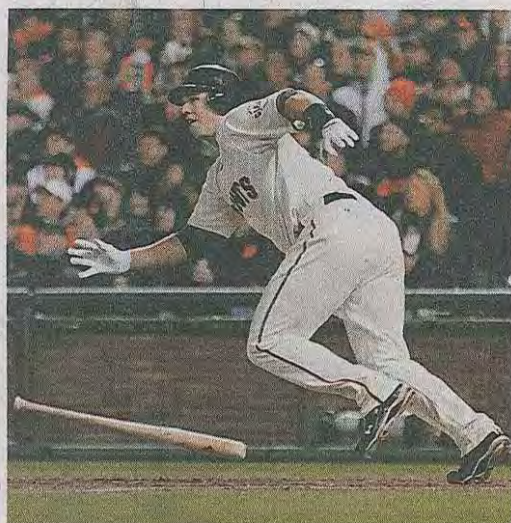
» **Bottom Line:** Why switching off Flip is no surprise. **D1**

» **Clean leader:** The governor signs law requiring utilities to get 33 percent of electricity from renewables by 2020. **D1**

Sporting Green

» **Giants:** Buster Posey, right, has three hits in a 5-4 come-from-behind win over the Dodgers. **B1**

» **Warriors:** The team looks to make Monta Ellis and Stephen Curry a more efficient backcourt. **B1**



Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Datebook

» **Cruise control:** Hundreds of boats made from paper, papier-mache and plastic will be on display this weekend around the Mission. **E1**

» **Book worms:** Home & Garden's spring book list includes hot topics such as gardening in an urban environment. **E1**

» **Mad about him:** Paul Reiser is back with a TV show that begs, borrows and steals from "Curb Your Enthusiasm." **E1**

SFGATE.COM | Wednesday, April 13, 2011 | PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

San Francisco Chronicle

California's Best Large Newspaper AS NAMED BY THE CALIFORNIA NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION | \$1.00 ★★★★★

MEDICINE



Photos by Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Haitian quake victim Jean Xavier works with physical therapist Joe Caballero at San Francisco General Hospital.

Haitian takes big steps

S.F. General averts amputation by rebuilding quake victim's ankle

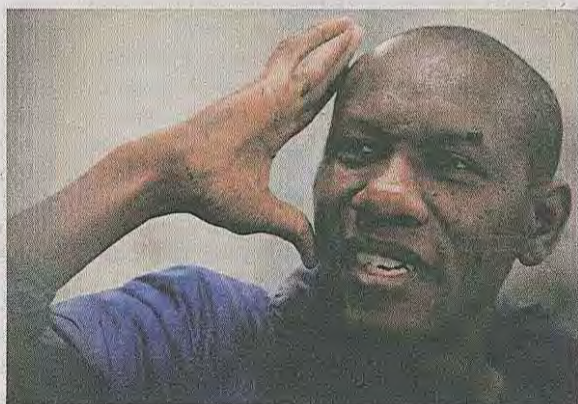
By Erin Allday
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Jean Xavier was lying in a hospital bed in Haiti during the first week of March 2010. A heavy metal frame and pins as thick as ice picks held his crushed foot and ankle in place. The pain was terrible.

Infection had set in six weeks after he'd been injured in the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that destroyed much of his hometown of Port-au-Prince. Hospital supplies were so low that he had to send friends and family to buy antiseptics to clean his wounds.

Xavier thought he might die. He almost definitely was going to lose his foot.

Xavier continues on A6



Xavier, a lawyer in Port-au-Prince, was trapped under rubble from the quake of Jan. 12, 2010.

"After amputation, I would lose my independence. Many people had amputations."

Jean Xavier, victim of Haitian quake, on his concerns

Sensors predict traffic ahead

Data expected to lead to smart-phone alerts

By Michael Cabanatuan
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A new traffic information system peers into the future, sees traffic jams before they happen and alerts commuters about possible trouble before they step out the front door. It could soon tell them whether they can save time by taking transit or simply surrender and work from home.

"Every once in a while, it will really save you a lot of time," said John Day, an IBM researcher working on the system. "Avoiding sitting, the car idling, wasting time, money and gas is a big thing for most commuters."

IBM, Caltrans and a UC Berkeley transportation research center this morning will announce the collaborative project to help commuters steer around congestion by warning them of anticipated troubles on the road and predicting trip times.

Services such as the 511 telephone information line, GPS, Internet traffic sites, and radio and television reports already offer data on traffic congestion and make travel time predictions. The new project aims to take those a couple of steps further, allowing drivers to gaze deeper into the future and personalizing the information to their commutes.

"There are plenty of things out there
Traffic continues on A6

Dining room's milestone

» Giants pitcher Barry Zito helps Tenderloin mainstay St. Anthony Dining Room mark a key event — serving its 37 millionth lunch since opening in 1950. **C1**

S.F. CITY HALL

New mayor, board shift political mood

By Heather Knight and Rachel Gordon
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITERS

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors' backing of a tax break for Twitter and other companies in Mid-Market and the Tenderloin is just the latest and clearest sign the tide has turned dramatically at City Hall.

In Bay Area

» **City Insider:** Mayor Ed Lee attends the supervisors' first "question time." **C1**

» **Garden fee:** Out-of-town visitors to the Botanical

Some of city's bond ratings downgraded

By John Coté and Rachel Gordon
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITERS

One of three major rating agencies Tuesday downgraded \$2.6 billion in San Francisco municipal bonds because of concerns over shrinking reserves and short-term fixes that the city has used to balance its budget in recent years.



FROM THE COVER

Hospital rebuilds Haitian's ankle

Xavier from page A1

"When I could not get care at the hospital, some people gave me the advice to come to the United States," said Xavier, 38. "For me, it was a great hope."

Xavier left Haiti that March 9, almost two months after the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, and arrived at San Francisco International Airport the next day. His sister, a dermatologist in San Francisco, took him straight to San Francisco General Hospital. He went on Medi-Cal, which covers medical expenses for Haitian refugees, and was admitted to the hospital.

A year and more than half a dozen surgeries later, he's walking again — and he still has his foot.

Xavier has a striking talent for remembering dates and times, and it's never more apparent than when he's recalling the day of the earthquake, and the weeks that followed.

He worked as a lawyer in Port-au-Prince, and on Jan. 12 he had had a busy morning. He returned to his office at 4 p.m. and met with a colleague who shared his office. They were talking when an explosion of noise interrupted them. The room shook violently, and the building collapsed around them.

Stuck in room for hours

When the shaking stopped, Xavier was on the floor, trapped under his desk. He couldn't move his right leg — his foot and ankle and part of the bones in his shin had been crushed. His colleague was bleeding profusely from the head. While Xavier watched, the colleague died.

Xavier was stuck in the room for hours, unable to move. The building shook from time to time, and he realized there'd been an earthquake. Around 3 a.m., a friend finally found him and carried him out of the rubble.

The main hospital was in ruins, so he was taken to a clinic. Xavier's leg was badly

broken, and he was bleeding from wounds around his ankle. The doctors and nurses at the clinic told him not to worry — his leg could be repaired, and because he didn't have life-threatening injuries, he'd have to wait for treatment. He lay on the floor while people died around him.

Pondering amputation

Over the next six weeks, Xavier was taken to three or four different hospitals and clinics, and seen by countless doctors, many of them visitors from other countries who had come to help. Some said his foot could be saved; many more said it would have to be amputated. A metal frame was placed around his leg to hold it in place — without it, his foot flopped to one side, totally unsupported.

Xavier thought a lot about amputation. He wondered how he would do with a prosthetic — if he'd get proper medical care, if he'd be able to get around well enough to do his job.

"After amputation, I would lose my independence," he said. "Many people had amputations. I had to think about my situation after the amputation."

Aside from his leg injury, Xavier was healthy. When the wounds became badly infected, that's when he thought about leaving Haiti. "I left home at 6 a.m. on Jan. 12," he said. "And I never went back."

Dr. Saam Morshed, an orthopedic surgeon at S.F. General, remembers the night Xavier was brought in. Another doctor called him and told him he had to come straight to the emergency room — the doctors in ER had never seen injuries like Xavier's before.

It had been a month and a half since the initial injury, and there were still gaping wounds as wide as a baseball on both sides of what was left of his ankle. Half of a key bone in his foot was missing, along with the bottom edge of his fibula. The frame around his shin and foot had been poorly placed

and was holding his leg at an odd angle.



Photos by Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Haitian quake victim Jean Xavier confers with orthopedic surgeon Saam Morshed at San Francisco General Hospital. "My job is not chopping off legs unless I really have to," Morshed says.



Xavier, who can walk again, is fitted for orthopedic shoes during physical therapy at San Francisco General Hospital.

and was holding his leg at an odd angle.

"Any one of those injuries presents a huge challenge to healing. All of them together? That never happens," Morshed said. "I thought more likely than not he was going to need an amputation."

"But my job is not chopping off legs unless I really have to."

Reconstructing ankle

Doctors removed the metal frame and pins and for two weeks focused only on making sure the wounds were clean. About every other day, Xavier would be taken to an operating room to remove dead bone and tissue. Eventually, he was left with a hollow space where a large piece of his ankle didn't exist anymore.

To save the foot and get Xavier walking again, Morshed

would have to reconstruct his ankle with skin and muscle grafts and a new mass of bone. Strips of skin and muscle were taken from Xavier's belly and sides. Doctors drilled through his femur with a reamer and collected the powdery bone shavings that would be used for the needed bone mass.

Morshed crammed the powder into a pouch in Xavier's ankle created from muscle and skin, and after several weeks, it had formed into a solid chunk of new bone. A long nail driven through Xavier's heel and into his tibia helped stabilize the foot, along with a metal plate at the end of the fibula.

"He will be able to use his foot for the rest of his life," Morshed said. "It's a huge save."

Last summer, Xavier walked for the first time since the

earthquake. He eventually needed additional surgeries to repair tendons in his foot because his toes were starting to turn under, making walking painful.

His right ankle is almost a solid mass of bone, which means he can't move the foot from side to side or up and down. He wears special shoes with curved soles to give him a more fluid, natural walk. He'll always have a limp, but he's managed to dump first his crutches and then a cane. Last month, Xavier finished physical therapy at S.F. General.

A new life in S.F.

Xavier now lives in an apartment about a mile from City College, where he's taking English classes. He didn't speak a word of English when he arrived in San Francisco. His English is halting now, but easily understandable. On most days, he takes the streetcar to the campus, but occasionally will walk halfway.

He thinks sometimes of Haiti and how completely his life has changed. He doesn't know if he'll ever go back.

"The most important thing is to manage every present moment, because we are not sure about the future," he said. "Yes, I miss Haiti. But the most important thing isn't what I miss, it's what I have now."

E-mail Erin Allday at callday@sfgchronicle.com.

Warnings on traffic problems — before they occur

Traffic from page A1

that will tell you what traffic is like based on the last five or 10 minutes," Day said. "But there's nothing to tell you what it should look like in the next 35 to 40 minutes."

Researchers developed the traffic-prediction system by taking historic data from Caltrans' network of road sensors, which calculate traffic volumes and record speeds, and putting it into IBM analytic software to determine what happens to traffic in certain conditions. Real-time traffic conditions are plugged into that model and trip times calculated.

If, for instance, an accident on westbound Interstate 80 that closes one lane at 7:45 a.m. in Emeryville has historically caused a 20-minute backup in Richmond 15 minutes later, the system will factor that information into its trip-time calculations.

Personalized information

Participants in the program, now being tested by about a dozen IBM employees, receive personalized alerts via text message or e-mail. The system determines when to send the notices based on information it gathers from an application on users' smart phones. The app

tracks their travels over time and determines which trips they tend to take and when. It automatically sends a message about five to 10 minutes before any frequently taken trip — most often a weekday commute.

"We wanted to remove the requirement for someone to go to a website to request information," Day said.

Commuters are able to manage their trip information on a Web page only they can access.

The next step is to integrate transit and parking information, already collected and analyzed by UC Berkeley researchers, and offer trip plan-

ners that display not only driving times but also transit alternatives.

Trip planning

"The idea is to have a much more comprehensive trip planner," Day said, "so if there is a (congestion) problem, it tells you where parking is available at a station and when the train leaves."

Information from the traffic-prediction tool can also be used to improve the timing of traffic signals and metering lights, officials said, and could help planners better manage the transportation system and cope with growth.

"It's unrealistic to think we can solve this congestion problem simply by adding more lanes to roadways," said Greg Larson, chief of the Caltrans office of traffic operations research.

Researchers say the system has worked well for several months, and is ready for broader testing. But there is no definite date as to when it will be available for the commuting public. When it is, Day said, it will be a valuable tool on those all-too-frequent days when something snarls the commute.

E-mail Michael Cabanatuan at mcabanatuan@sfgchronicle.com.

NATION

NASA

Space shuttles assigned to new homes