

A kiss that helped sway a church

Mormon, gay rights talks began after a 2009 confrontation.

BY MARIA L. LA GANGA

It started with a kiss. Matthew Aune and Derek Jones were heading home from a Bon Iver concert on a summer night in 2009, strolling through Main Street Plaza just east of the Salt Lake Temple, the holiest site in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Aune bussed his partner on the cheek. Church security guards appeared. The twentysomething men said they were cuffed and forced to the ground. The church's official statement said the couple had been "engaged in passionate kissing, groping, profane and lewd language" on private church property, an account the two men vigorously contested.

The encounter, highlighting fissures between the powerful church and Salt Lake City, the increasingly cosmopolitan city it calls home, ultimately set the stage for Tuesday's historic announcement by Mormon elders that the church would support protections in certain cases for gays and lesbians against discrimination in employment, housing and some public accommodations.

The 2009 incident opened the door to an unlikely series of back-channel talks between mid-level church officials and members of the gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual community. Meeting in private homes and other venues seen as neutral turf, they spent much of the next five years exchanging views, discussing policy changes, even socializing. They shared jokes, music and sometimes tears. [See **Mormon**, A13]



MARION "SUGE" KNIGHT, center, walks into a Sheriff's Department facility early Friday. While other rappers have moved beyond the genre's thug life image, Knight continues to find trouble.

FOR 'SUGE' KNIGHT, ONE MORE SCRAPE

BY ANGEL JENNINGS, JOSEPH SERNA AND CINDY CHANG

From the beginning, Marion "Suge" Knight's life as a rap impresario was closely intertwined with the gangster ways extolled by his artists in their music.

His first notable brush with the law came in 1993, when as a leader of Death Row Records he was charged with using a gun to attack two aspiring rappers.

Over the next 20 years, he spent stints in jail and was injured several times by gunfire, making tabloid headlines while his career diminished. He now faces the most serious charges of his life, arrested on suspicion of killing a 55-year-old man after getting into an argument during the filming of a commercial for an upcoming movie about the early days of rap in Compton, where he grew up.

On Friday, detectives from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's De-

History of trouble

A look at Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight's troubles over the last 20 years:

Sent to prison: In 1996 for nearly five years after badly beating a rival at a Las Vegas hotel. At the time of the incident, Knight was accompanied by rapper Tupac Shakur.

Jailed: In 2002 for violating his probation by associating with Los Angeles gang members.

Parole violation: In 2003 after punching a Hollywood nightclub parking lot attendant.

Shot: In Miami during a 2005 MTV Video Music Awards pre-party.

Hospitalized: In 2009 after a fight at a hotel in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Shot: In 2014 during an altercation at a Hollywood nightclub.

Source: Associated Press

partment released new details about the events leading up to the death of Terry Carter, hailed by some as a father figure for troubled young men.

Ice Cube and Dr. Dre were among the big-name rappers who had converged on the area to film a commercial for "Straight Outta Compton," a biopic about N.W.A., a seminal group from the early days of the genre.

On the set Thursday, sheriff's deputies asked Knight, 49, to leave after he began arguing with another man, Cle "Bone" Sloan, Lt. John Corina said.

Later, at Tam's Burgers at Central and East Rosecrans avenues, Knight was in his red Ford F-150 Raptor when he and Sloan tangled again, Corina said.

While Knight was still seated in his truck, he and Sloan argued and exchanged punches. Knight reversed his truck, knocking Sloan to the ground, Corina said.

Knight drove forward, appearing to aim the vehicle at Sloan and Cart-

[See **Knight**, A13]

Romney stirs up GOP contest again

Party establishment favorites Christie and Bush should benefit most as he rules out a 2016 presidential bid.

BY MARK Z. BARABAK AND SEEMA MEHTA

Mitt Romney's exit from the 2016 presidential campaign pushes the GOP race back where it was three weeks ago, before his brief flirtation: a wide-open contest among the establishment, religiously oriented, and libertarian wings of the Republican Party.

The immediate beneficiaries are former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, rivals who share Romney's appeal to the business-minded, pragmatically conservative voters of their party. They wasted no time Friday chasing donors who had sat frozen, awaiting Romney's decision.

"People are working the phones furiously," said Bobbie Kilberg, a major Republican contributor in Virginia, who jumped into Christie's camp immediately after Romney announced his withdrawal.

Other prospective candidates stood to gain as well, including Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a pair of relatively fresh faces who until now have been overshadowed by the far-better-known Bush, the son and brother of former presidents, and Romney, who tried for the White House in 2008 and ran as the party's nominee in 2012.

"This kind of upsets the apple cart," said Craig Robinson, a GOP activist in Iowa, the state that kicks off the presidential balloting with its wintry caucuses. "With Romney out it allows Bush and Chris Christie and Scott Walker a little more room to operate."

But their jostling is only a part of the Republican nominating fight, which could draw 10 or more serious contestants; many of them are already working frenetically behind the scenes.

Several of those already vying, including a pair of previous candidates, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and ex-Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, are competing for the support of evangelical Christians, a crucial constituency in early-voting states such as Iowa and South Carolina. Others, including Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Ted Cruz of Texas, are favorites of the tea party wing of the GOP and adherents of the movement's limited-government [See **Romney**, A14]

Super Bowl wasn't always audience magnet it is now

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

NBC sports executive Dick Ebersol was unhappy about the matchup for Super Bowl XLIII in 2009.

The Pittsburgh Steelers were always a desirable draw. But the Arizona Cardinals? The franchise had a long history of futility in the NFL and some embarrassing losses in the regular season.

Veteran sportscaster Al Michaels said he tried to allay Ebersol's concerns of a



Getty Images

Nothing can deflate Goodell

The NFL commissioner is pumped up at his Super Bowl news conference, Bill Plaschke writes. **SPORTS, D1**

Halftime option

YouTube gets in on the action with its own streaming show. **BUSINESS, C1**

ratings dive: "Dick, do you think that anybody in America wakes up on Super Bowl Sunday and says to his wife — 'The Arizona Cardinals are in the Super Bowl, let's go to the movies today,'" he said. "It just doesn't happen."

The Steelers' 27-23 victory in the final minute was watched by 98.7 million viewers, the second consecutive year that the Super Bowl's audience hit a new high. That record has since been broken four more times, with last year's Seattle Seahawks' 43-8 rout of the Denver Broncos the most-watched television event in history with 112.2 million viewers.

No matter who plays or how lopsided the score is, the Super Bowl is the only television event considered bulletproof for the three networks that take turns carrying the game: NBC, CBS and Fox. Even the Oscar telecast has down years.

Tuning into the perennially No.1-rated TV event of the year is no longer just about football. It's a way for Americans to be part of a national conversation, whether it's about the puppy in the Budweiser commercials or debating Katy Perry's performance at Sunday's halftime show.

Social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have increased interest in the broadcast, which draws [See **Super Bowl**, A10]



LINTAO ZHANG Getty Images

SKIERS AT A RESORT in Zhangjiakou, China, where a sign advertises Beijing's bid to host the 2022 Olympics. China's only competitor is Kazakhstan.

China running in light field for 2022 Games

BY JULIE MAKINEN

ZHANGJIAKOU, China — At first glance, Beijing's quest to host the 2022 Winter Olympics may sound, well, a bit quixotic. After all, the city's skies are notoriously smoggy, its main proposed ski venue is a five-hour drive north of the city center, and the mountains there receive, bid organizers acknowledge, about 8 inches of snow annually.

But over the last year, Beijing's competition — once seen as formidable — has melted away. Cost con-

cerns and faltering public support prompted pullbacks by Oslo; Stockholm; Munich, Germany; and Krakow, Poland. The Ukrainian city of Lviv also had to bow out amid the military, political and economic crises in that country.

That has left the Chinese capital squaring off against just one opponent — Almaty, Kazakhstan — in what to many observers is feeling increasingly like a Goliath-vs.-David contest between two autocratic nations. Kazakhstan, a sprawling former Soviet satellite that sits on China's far western border,

is oil-rich, but its population of 17 million is smaller than that of Beijing, a metropolis of 21 million. Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, has 1.5 million people.

In mid-February, the International Olympic Committee's Evaluation Commission will conduct an inspection in Almaty, followed by one in Beijing in late March. A decision is due to be rendered at the end of July at an IOC gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"Very few people in the IOC, and in the wider sports community, see the choice [See **Olympics**, A6]



A PARTY WRAPPED IN BACON

SATURDAY

Weather
Some sun.
L.A. Basin: 73/53. **B8**

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