

PALOUSE PIRATE

Mike Leach may be WSU's most exciting character yet

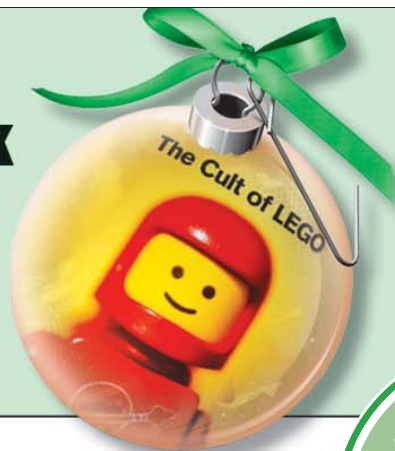
SPORTS > C1



Holiday gift-book bonanza

A coffee tableful of sumptuous reads

NW ARTS&LIFE > H1



Magical art from simple tools

PACIFIC NW



More than **\$120** in coupon savings inside

DECEMBER 4, 2011



AM FOG, PM SUN
High, 42. Low, 31. > B8
seattletimes.com/weather

The Seattle Times Sunday

WINNER OF EIGHT PULITZER PRIZES

\$2.00

seattletimes.com

\$800 TOWING CHARGE? THAT'S NOTHIN'!



Danny Westneat
Seattle Times staff columnist

The other day when I wrote about a guy who got whacked with an \$800 towing bill, a surprisingly large bunch of readers shrugged.

The guy deserved it, some said. If he hadn't parked illegally, problem solved.

The idea that we might need a law regulating towing rates — currently they can charge whatever they please — also took a laissez-faire lashing from some readers.

"We don't need any more laws on the books," wrote Don Clark, of Kirkland. "If you don't park where you are not supposed to park, you don't have to worry about towing costs."

OK, the guy, Chris Swanicke, was not blameless. He admitted he parked illegally and deserved the tow.

See > WESTNEAT, A22

City Light told to get leaner as rates rise

BY BOB YOUNG
Seattle Times staff reporter

Seattle City Light's power plants have too many employees. Distribution costs run high. Work crews are about twice the size of industry norms. Overtime costs are double the industry average. Work rules hamper productivity. Some spending is based on "political drivers."

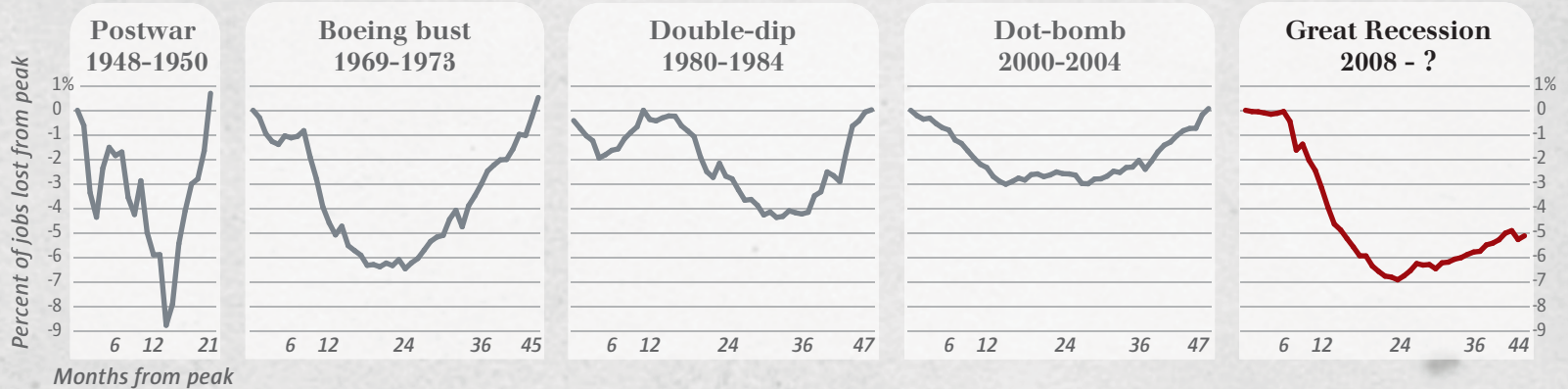
That's according to a \$140,000 study by a City Light consultant that says the publicly owned electric company is quite inefficient.

In all, the UMS Group reported City Light could save \$35 million a year if it ran more like comparable

See > UTILITY, A27

THE RECESSION'S TOLL

We are here



WHITNEY STENSURD / THE SEATTLE TIMES

BY DREW DESILVER / Seattle Times business reporter

For most of us, Washington's economy has never been this bad. Since the mortgage bubble popped we've lost more jobs faster, and recovered more slowly, than at any time since the Second World War. That includes iconic slumps such as the Boeing Bust, the early-'80s double-dip and the dot-com crash barely a decade ago.

And things aren't likely to get better anytime soon. Consulting firm IHS Global recently estimated that Washington won't regain all its lost jobs till the end of 2014. If that forecast pans out, this would be the state's slowest recovery on record.

Almost all of us are feeling the pain, even if we've managed to retain our own jobs, homes and health insurance. Everyone knows someone who was laid off two years ago and is still out of work, or

someone who's stuck with a house she can't sell and a mortgage she can't pay.

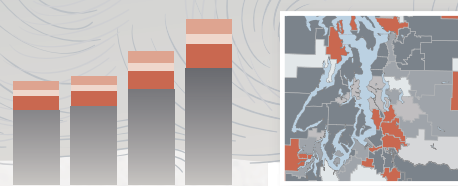
Nearly 36,000 Puget Sound-area residents have been unemployed so long their benefits have run out. More than 42,300 area homes have been repossessed since the start of 2008. And one of every four people in Kent is on food stamps.

As the charts and graphs on A25 show, the recession has fallen hardest on people in the lower-middle and working classes — folks who were just getting by or maybe starting to make some headway when the bottom fell out.

Statistics can't, of course, capture all the busted hopes and soured dreams, or the pervasive sense of economic dislocation the slump has engendered. But they can at least help us understand what's happening and to whom.

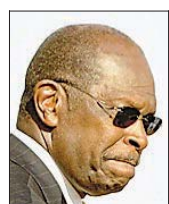
Drew DeSilver: 206-464-3145 or ddesilver@seattletimes.com

Inside: Riding out a rough economy
A by-the-numbers look at tough times in the Puget Sound area > A25



WEB EXTRA

Conversation on seattletimes.com
Join economist Dick Conway and Seattle Times business reporters to talk about the Great Recession's local impact Tuesday at noon.



INSIDE Cain suspends campaign

With Herman Cain out of the race, attention turns to the battle between Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney > A5



In BUSINESS Boeing, machinists' deal no small feat

Columnist Jon Talton explains how compromise benefits both sides and the region > D1

In REAL ESTATE There's an upside to dropping prices for condos

Buyers are finding affordable nooks in Seattle's most desirable neighborhoods > E1

© 2011 Seattle Times Co.
60% of our newsprint contains recycled fiber, and inks are reused.



Porcello Is Buying Now!

GUARANTEED TO MEET OR BEAT ANY REASONABLE OFFER!

10 Day Buying Event!

Wed. 12/7 - Fri. 12/16

Porcello Estate Buyers

425-454-2300



See our ad in today's main news.