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Cathleen Allison / Associated Press 2009

Johannes Mehserle faces a murder charge for shooting a man at an Oakland BART station on Jan. 1, 2009.

Tough call for defense

Putting former BART officer on stand could make or break murder case

By Demian Bulwa
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

The only person who knows for sure why former BART police Officer Johannes Mehserle killed an unarmed train rider is Mehserle himself. But whether he will explain the shooting at his murder trial is

an open question — and a monumental one.

Although Mehserle has a constitutional right not to testify, jurors will expect to hear from him because his state of mind is key to his defense and because he was a law officer trained to report his actions, said several attorneys and trial

consultants.

But while Mehserle has an opportunity to connect with jurors, the experts said, he also faces significant risks if he opens himself up to cross-examination about the shooting of Oscar Grant during an arrest at BART's Fruitvale Station in Oakland on Jan. 1,

2009.

Opening statements in the trial, which was moved to Los Angeles, are scheduled for Thursday. But experts predict that defense attorneys will put off the decision on whether to send Mehserle to the stand as long as possible while they size

Trial continues on A10



Photos by Lacy Atkins / The Chronicle

Lee Hudson celebrates his winning bid at Auction Napa Valley, one of the country's most prestigious benefits.

Auction, bidders loosen up

Napa Valley benefit, at 30, rebounds with \$8.51 million

By Jon Bonné
CHRONICLE WINE EDITOR

Master sommeliers armed with water pistols. Men in shorts and short sleeves. Women in thigh-high dresses dancing to the Bangles' "Walk Like an Egyptian" — and yes, the Bangles themselves were onstage.

This was Auction Napa Valley?

Wine Country's biggest annual charity event celebrated its 30th anniversary over the weekend with a haul of \$8.51 million, an impressive rebound from last year's \$5.7 million when the recession halted sales of top-end wines and snapped shut

Auction continues on A8



Lars Kronmark of the Culinary Institute of America preps lobster.

How it's grown

Auction Napa Valley has been a significant funding source for Napa County organizations for 30 years. Recipients include health and welfare providers, and child-immunization, literacy and child-abuse-prevention programs.

\$140,000: Amount raised in 1981, its first year

\$10.5 million: 2005's record haul

\$5.7 million: 2009 take

\$8.5 million: This year's yield

Source: Napa Valley Vintners

HEALTH

Lofty goal: Stamp out silent killer hepatitis B

By Erin Allday
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

San Francisco public health officials and Asian community leaders are trying to eradicate hepatitis B from the city — a tall order, considering the city has the highest concentration of hepatitis B in the country, as well as the highest rates of liver cancer, which is usually caused by the virus.

The key to wiping out hepatitis B — and protecting people from liver cancer — is to make screening a basic part of health care, especially among Asians, say doctors and Asian American health advocates who have launched a campaign to get more people tested.

"We have the potential to wipe this disease off the face of the Earth," said Ted Fang, publisher of AsianWeek, an online news service, who helped create a local campaign called San Francisco Hep B Free. "We're trying to make hepatitis B prevention and screening a standard of care for Asian Americans."

As many as 1 in 10 Asian Americans is infected with hepatitis B, which is usually a benign virus that causes no symptoms. But among those with chronic infections, meaning they carry the virus throughout their lives, 25 percent will develop serious complications that can lead to liver cancer and death. The rate of survival beyond five years for liver cancer is about 26 percent if it doesn't spread outside the liver.

Hepatitis B is widespread in many
Hepatitis continues on A11