

Sole witnesses avoid stand in murders

HOUSTON (AP) — Defense attorneys tried unsuccessfully Monday to get onto the witness stand the only two known survivors of Houston's mass murder-torture ring and continued to hammer away at the question of civil rights of the defendant, Elmer Wayne Henley, 17.

Henley is charged in connection with the death of Charles R. Cobble, 17. He also faces five other murder charges.

Monday's court activity was part of a pre-trial hearing for Henley, whose statements to police, along with those of another Houston teenager, led officers to the discovery of 27 bodies reportedly killed during a three-year period.

The murders came to light when Henley called police from a Pasadena, Tex., home to say he had killed Dean A. Corll, 33, the alleged ringleader.

The two survivors of the torture-homosexual ring are Rhonda Williams, 15, and Timothy Kerley, 20, who reportedly escaped death when Henley shot Corll.

Defense Attorney Will Gray had announced early Monday that he would call Miss Williams to the stand, but later, after a 20-minute conference in the judge's chambers, said that, "we are having a little trouble getting Miss Williams."

Miss Williams was reported to be in school Monday. She is on probation for "juvenile offenses,"

the only official charge against youngsters in Texas.

A juvenile court judge, Chris Cole, issued an order forbidding reporters to talk with Miss Williams. Kerley has avoided news-men.

Gray said he also tried to get Kerley on the stand, but was told he was not feeling well because of an attack of hepatitis he suffered last November.

Gray said he expected to have Miss Williams and Kerley on the stand Tuesday.

Gray questioned two Houston detectives, T. E. Baker and K. D. Porter, Monday. They told the court how Henley led officers to the places where the victims were buried.

Gray asked Baker if he had advised Henley that even if he were guilty, it might be in his best interest to have a lawyer. The detective said he had not.

Dist. Atty. Carol Vance asked, "Did you ever hear the defendant request a lawyer at any time?" Baker said he did not.

Defense lawyers in the pre-trial hearing are trying to get all of Henley's oral and written statements — prosecutors call them confessions — thrown out.

Henley's lawyers want a six-month delay.

Miss Williams and Kerley were in Corll's home at a sex and paint-sniffing party the night Corll was killed, testimony has shown. Henley, who is accused of

procuring youths for \$200 each, said he shot Corll because Corll was mistreating the pair.

Also during the Monday session, defense attorneys brought to the stand Fred Edison of television station KPRC-TV.

Henley made a phone call using Edison's news radio telephone on Aug. 8 from the boat shed where police found some of the victim's bodies.

The court also saw a film clip showing Henley making the phone call. In it a crying Henley was shown hiding his face from the cameras and talking to his mother.

"I killed Dean," Henley said over the phone. Then he said

three times: "It's alright, it's alright, it's alright." His mother's answers were not audible. At one time he said: "You can't come, I'm with the police, momma."

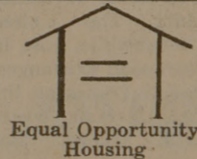
Henley and another defendant, David Owen Brooks, 18, led officers to 17 bodies buried under a Houston boat shed, four in the forests near San Augustine, Tex., and six on a beach near High Island, Tex.

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Simon promises fuel price control

AUSTIN (AP) — Federal energy czar William Simon pledged to Texas' business and government policymakers Monday that his office would not allow oil and gas prices to reach "emotional levels."

Simon said the United States had a "super-abundance of natural resources" and the ability to supply all of its own energy within the next decade.

Obviously, in a nation that has

6 per cent of the world's population but uses 35 per cent of the world's energy, "there is a tremendous amount of waste," he told the Governor's Energy Advisory Council.

He said Americans need to develop new life styles and to "forge a new energy ethic."

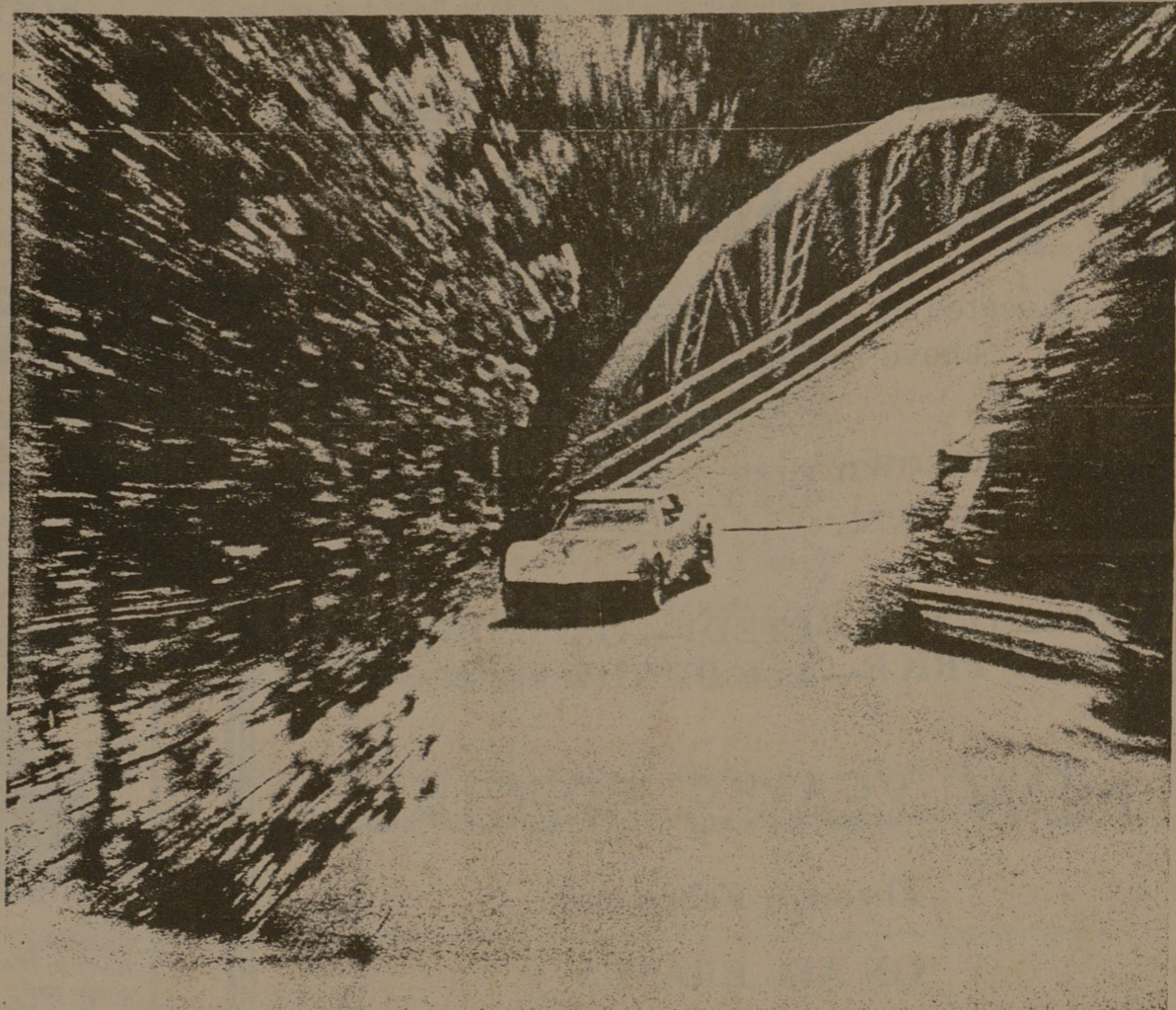
In introducing Simon to the 26-member advisory council, Gov. Dolph Briscoe said the United States needs a "massive effort, such as the effort during World War II which led to the development of synthetic rubber," to cope with the energy shortage.

"We need this effort now to develop a pollution-free process for the gasification of coal, our most abundant fuel, and to develop solar energy and fusion," Briscoe said.

It was the second stop of the day for Simon in the state that produces over one-third of the nation's oil and gas. He came here to talk with Briscoe, the council and Texas Railroad commissioners — which regulate oil and gas production—after addressing the National Association of Home-builders in Houston.

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