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Media plans appeal of closed hearing

United Press International
HOUSTON — A judge Monday ruled a hearing closed on a convicted murderer's request for a new trial and then recessed court until today to allow attorneys for the news media and the defendant to appeal.

Death row inmate Vernon Eugene McManus of Beaumont, a former assistant football coach at Lamar University, has asked for a new trial on grounds his defense lawyer was having an affair with his wife during his original trial in 1977.

"I don't believe justice or the rights of the witnesses are going to be served by opening this hearing," said District Judge I.D. McMaster.

Lawyers for The Houston Post, Houston Chronicle and KPRC radio and television argued the hearing should be open. McManus' new lawyers said their client has a constitutional right to an open hearing.

Lawyers for both newspapers planned opposition to McMaster's decision by appealing to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in Austin. Post Managing Editor Kuyk Logan said "We're going to fight this all the way."

Lawyers for McManus said they would seek an injunction from a federal court.

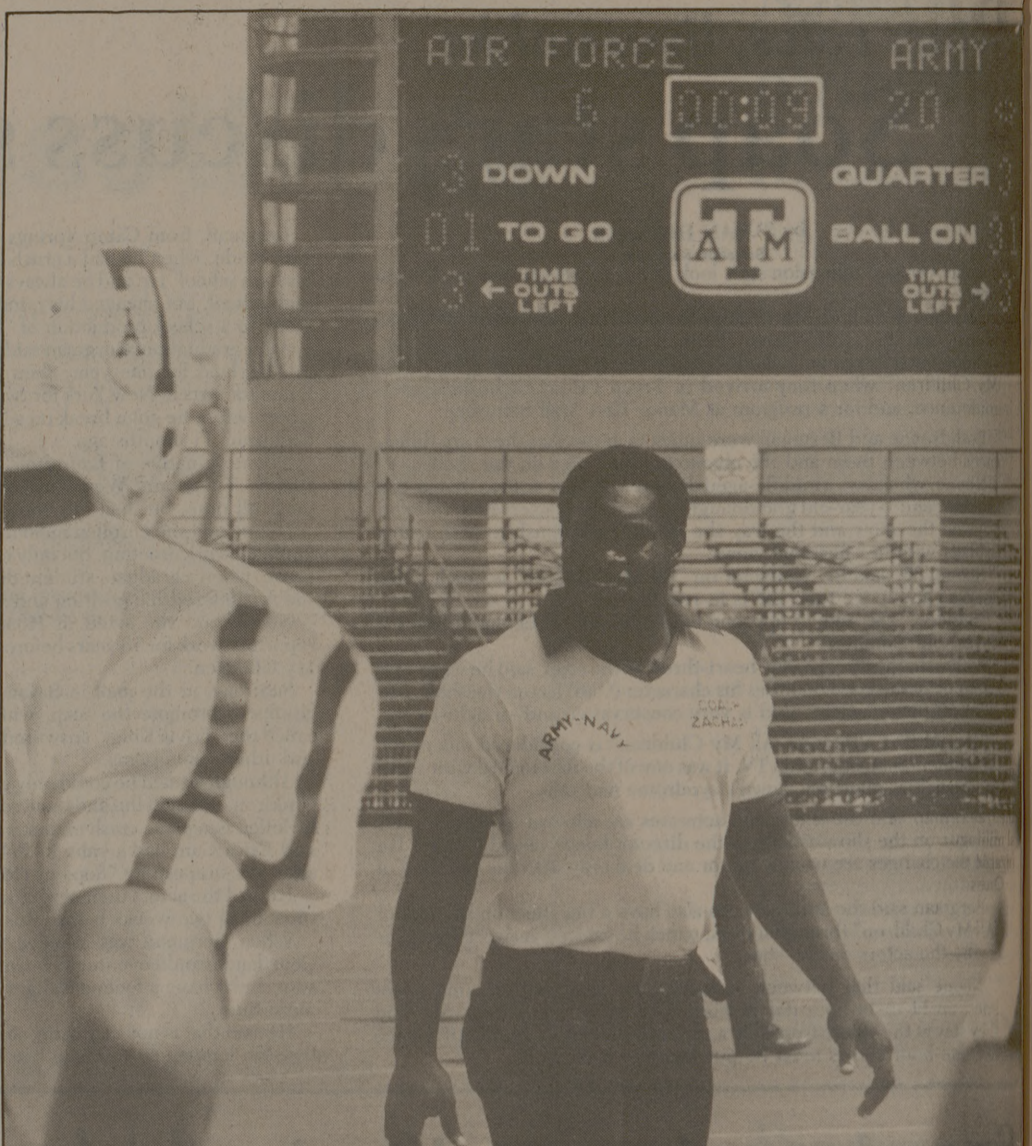
McManus was convicted of the hired slaying of Paul Cantrell, father of a secretary in the Lamar athletic department. Paula Cantrell pleaded guilty to the hired murder and received a life sentence. Cantrell testified McManus sought a portion of the insurance from her father's death.

McManus' petition for a new trial alleges his former lawyer, Don Smith of Baytown, and his wife, Regina, were having an affair while he was on trial. McManus and his wife were divorced in 1977 and she married Smith in 1979.

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Hey, Coach...
James Zachary, defensive linebacker for the Texas Aggies, looks at his potential defensive unit in the annual Elephant Bowl Sunday afternoon. The Army-Navy cadets of Texas A&M University won the event by a score of 27-19 against the combined efforts of the Air Force cadets and the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band.
Staff photo by Lynn Blanco

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Inmate escapes Santa Fe prison
United Press International
SANTA FE, N.M. — Authorities Monday searched the southwest section of the city for a state prison inmate who apparently escaped by clinging to the undercarriage of a National Guard truck bringing food to the riot-torn prison.
Officials said, however, they had no reports anyone had seen escapee Bill C. Killingsworth, who was serving two life terms on rape and related charges when he fled the prison Sunday afternoon.
John Ramming, an aide to corrections secretary Adolph Saenz, said "We don't have anyone who's given us any information that might help find out where he's holed up."
Acting Warden Felix Rodriguez said in a Monday news conference that Killingsworth apparently escaped from the prison shortly after noon Sunday by clinging to the undercarriage of the truck.
Guard units have been assisting the food service program since Feb. 2-3 inmate uprising in which the prison kitchen and other areas were heavily damaged and 33 people were killed.
"There's been no information that leads us to believe that he's not still here in the Santa Fe area," said Ramming.
Rodriguez confirmed the prison still undermanned, although he said the Sunday staffing level was normal. One officer was assigned to stand in a "pit" to examine the undercarriages of vehicles leaving the prison, but said no blame had been fixed for the escape yet.
He said "prison intelligence" received word about 1:30 p.m. Sunday that Killingsworth had escaped. An immediate count of the inmates confirmed that information.
Killingsworth set up a dummy dressed in prison garb to delay discovery of his escape.
Killingsworth was committed to the penitentiary in August 1977 to serve two life terms after he was convicted of kidnapping, rape and attempted rape in an attack on a 16-year-old Bernalillo County girl.

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