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'These guys are serious ...'

Pepper's restaurant on Texas avenue has taken a rather bold approach to the parking problem at their establishment.

Staff photo by George Dolan

Ten-year term given Ranger

HOUSTON — A federal judge Wednesday imposed a maximum 10-year prison sentence on a Texas Ranger convicted of civil rights violations in the beating of a handcuffed man. Officials said Ranger Kenneth Wayne Fricke, 35, who has appealed his conviction, was the first Texas Ranger convicted of a felony. He has been suspended from the force. U.S. District Judge Woodrow Seals' sentencing of Fricke followed his jury conviction Aug. 5 of civil rights violations in beating a Sealy, Texas, railroad engineer Feb. 26, 1979, near Wallis. Prosecutors said Fricke was a Department of Public Safety narcotics investigator when he took Larry Michael Hintz, 28, in handcuffs from a Wallis bar to a field to "teach him a lesson." Hintz suffered a broken jaw.

Rail service speech today

State, local and municipal officials and business leaders will hear Amtrak president Alan S. Boyd discuss the proposed Texas Triangle for expanded rail service at 1 p.m. today in Rudder Forum. The Texas Triangle would provide high speed rail transportation connecting Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and cities located between them.

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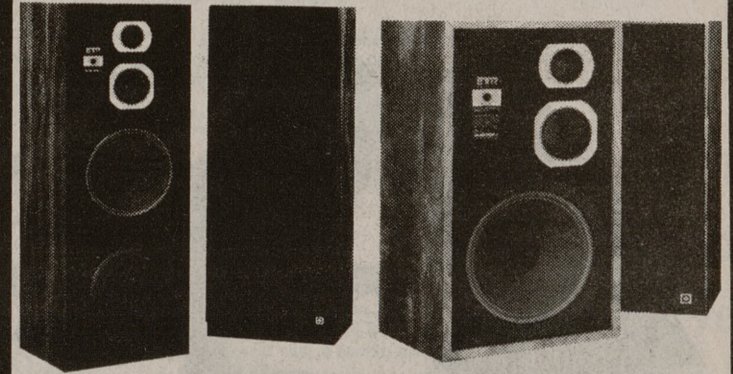
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Bell slander suit dismissed

AUSTIN — The state Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed the slander suit against Southwestern Bell by one of its former executives and the widow of another. Oleta Gravitt Dixon, whose husband killed himself after Bell investigated his sexual conduct and expense accounts, and James Ashley, who was fired by Bell as a result of the same investigation, won the case when it was first tried but have now lost on appeal.

Gravitt was a vice-president of the company and Ashley was general commercial manager for San Antonio. Bell began its investigation in the fall of 1974 and suspended Ashley pending the results of the investigation. A week after Ashley was suspended, Gravitt died of carbon monoxide poisoning in the garage of his Dallas home. Ashley was fired two weeks after Gravitt killed himself.

The company said the investigation revealed sexual promiscuity

with subordinate employees and false expense reports on the part of both executives.

The lawsuit also charged the company with the wrongful death of Gravitt. His widow said the investigations and the slanders against him caused him to go insane and kill himself.

The trial court ruled for Ashley and Gravitt's widow and awarded them damages of \$1.5 million each. Then the Court of Civil Appeals ruled that the company's behavior toward its executives was not moti-

vated by "actual malice," that is, the company was not guilty of knowing falsity or reckless disregard for the truth. Ashley and Gravitt's widow were therefore not entitled to damages.

It was that opinion that the Supreme Court declined to review. State law permits appeal of slander cases to the Supreme Court only when there is conflict among the appeals courts or between an appeals court and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court found that it had no jurisdiction.

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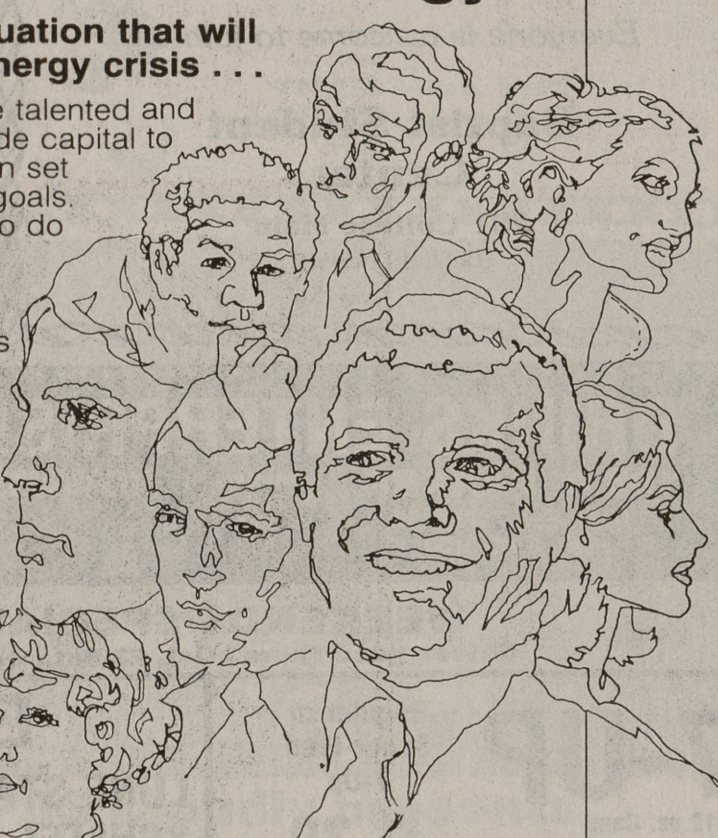
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