

State

Speaker's wife may have shot spouse in self-defense

United Press International
LIBERTY — With the estranged wife who shot him looking on, former Texas House Speaker Price Daniel Jr. was memorialized Wednesday with police withholding charges until they decide whether she fired in self-defense.

Thin, blonde Vickie Daniel, 33, who had to be helped out of First United Methodist Church after the funeral and did not attend the burial on a plot at the Daniel ranch. She returned to Kersting Hospital after the church service.

Liberty County Sheriff Buck Eckols and District Attorney Carroll Wilborn Jr. said they were sure Mrs. Daniel fired the shot from a .22-caliber rifle that killed the 39-year-old Daniel in his home at the ranch Monday.

She had not been arrested or charged because they had not determined whether the shot was fired as a homicide, an accident or in self-defense. Mrs. Daniel apparently was the only witness to the 7:30 p.m. incident.

Eckols said Mrs. Daniel's lawyer, Andrew Lannie of Baytown, sug-

gested the shooting was self-defense. She had filed for divorce twice during their troubled four-year marriage, most recently on Dec. 31.

The sheriff said Lannie told him Mrs. Daniel fired a warning shot before shooting the bullet that pierced Daniel's aorta and lodged in his spine. Daniel bled to death. Eckols said two shells were found in the kitchen but no second bullet was found.

Eckols expressed doubts — "If she was afraid of him, she could have run" — and said he had tried to question Mrs. Daniel at the hospital early Wednesday but was turned away. He said her refusal to talk made him suspicious.

"I knew him (Daniel Jr.) all his life. He's not a violent person. He's got a great personality. There's no way he could be violent and hide it from me. I'm not taking up for him. I'm telling the truth."

Eckols and Wilborn admitted there was some evidence, broken glass and other undisclosed evidence, suggesting a possible struggle before the shooting.

"There is at least some evidence there was some disagreement between the parties as to the divorce," Wilborn said. "That's what I'm trying to tie down through investigation, exactly what Price Daniel Jr.'s day was that day and whether there were any particular altercations."

Eckols said the rifle — which he said was bolt-action but magazine-loaded, meaning a person would not have to insert a bullet to fire a second shot — was found on the floor of a bedroom near the kitchen where the shooting occurred. Daniel's body was found in a hallway between the kitchen and the carport.

Harris County Medical examiner Joseph Jachimczyk performed an autopsy, ruling Daniel died of one bullet wound to the abdomen, but withheld ruling whether the death was homicide.

Three children — the couple's two children, 3-year-old Franklin and 10-month-old Price IV, and Kim Moore, 11, Mrs. Daniel's daughter by a previous marriage — were in another part of the house and did not hear the shooting.

Judge decides on Grimes prison land purchase Friday

United Press International
AUSTIN — District Judge Pete Lowry said he will decide Friday whether to enjoin the Department of Corrections from buying 6,000 acres in Grimes County for a new prison.

A two-day hearing on the injunction ended Tuesday. Ten Grimes County residents have asked the court to stop the prison, arguing that it would violate suggestions by a federal court that prisons should be smaller than in the past, harm the quality of life in the rural East Texas county, damage the large beekeeping industry there and interfere with certain easements across the land.

The residents also have attacked the method of selecting the prison site. In testimony Tuesday, witnesses said they were not notified soon enough about the department's plans to buy the land and were not given adequate opportunity to protest.

Assistant Attorney General Jerry Cain, representing the department, explained to Lowry that the public meetings were posted on the bulletin board in the secretary of state's

office as required by law.

Jerry Falkner, an economist who lives in Navasota, said he did not see the notices because "I wouldn't have occasion to have been here (in Austin)."

"It's our position that the law worked," Cain said. "It's designed to have the media disseminate notice." Cain introduced newspaper stor-

ies about the proposed land purchase and meetings to discuss it.

Charles Coates, a plaintiff in the suit, said he went to one of the meetings but the site was discussed in an executive session. Asked if the public had a chance to discuss the purchase, Coates said, "there was no discussion."

Nineteen ounce baby boy reported in stable condition

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — A four-month premature baby, small enough to fit into the palm of his physician's hand, was in stable condition Wednesday at Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center.

The boy, who weighs 1 pound, 3 ounces, is one of the smallest in recent memory, said Maj. Keith Meredith of Wilford Hall.

"He is so small that a size 10 shoe could be used as a bassinet," Meredith said.

The baby was born Friday at Nix

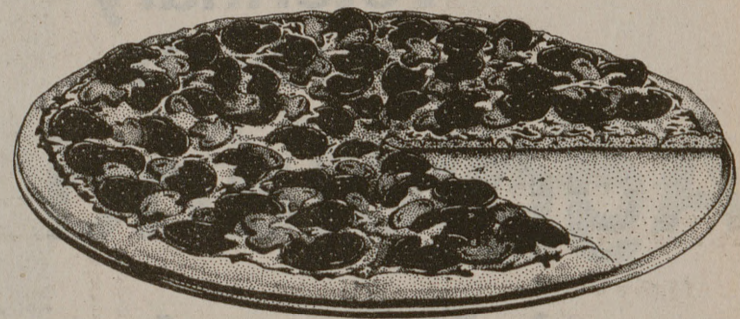
Memorial Hospital and was transferred to Wilford Hall immediately after his condition stabilized. Names of the parents, who are San Antonio residents, were not released at their request.

Meredith said the baby is on a ventilator to help him breathe, but he is stable considering he was in his mother's womb only 24 weeks.

"He's doing well, but it is a guarded optimism," Meredith said. "Problems still could crop up and his condition could change at any time."

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