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Daniel awarded custody of children

United Press International

LIBERTY — Jurors who allowed Vickie Daniel to keep her children said they thought they were listening to a murder trial, not a child custody case, and Daniel's attorneys said the criminal charges against her should now be dropped.

One of Daniel's lawyers, noted defense attorney Richard "Racehorse" Haynes, called the jury decision in the child custody case the "ultimate" verdict.

Daniel,. 33, was awarded custody of her two small children late Thursday by a jury of 11 people. The jury unanimously selected neither woman, therefore giving Mrs. Daniel complete control over her sons.

Moments after the verdict was read, most of the jurors said they felt that for six weeks they had heard a murder trial instead of a child custody case.

Juror Leslie Bartlett, 35, the musical director at the First United Methodist Church, said if the evidence presented in the criminal case is the same as what he had heard, "it could go either way."

"But I don't think enough evidence was given beyond a reasonable doubt. There were too many unanswered questions," Bartlett said.

Haynes said based on the evidence he has seen "frankly, they don't have a murder case."

He said he had "resisted fiercely" having the custody case before the criminal trial, "but they ran over top of me on that."

"So I have to look for the silver lining in the cloud and that silver lining, of course, is the fact that I have seen their case, the prosecutor's case. It will give me some advantage," said Haynes. "They likewise have seen significant portions of my case and it gave the prosecutors some advantage."

Daniel has not yet stood trial for the slaying of her husband, former Texas House Speaker Price Daniel, Jr. but was the respondent in the child custody case against her sister-in-law, Jean Daniel Murph, in which much of the testimony concerned the shooting.

Another attorney for Daniel, Harlan Friend, said: "We tried it once and they wouldn't convict her.

"It (dropping the murder charge) would save the county an awful lot of money. We want to get the matter out of the way and not saddle the citizens of Liberty with additional expenses."

Friend said he plans to meet with Liberty County District Attorney Carroll Wilborn and offer results from a polygraph test by Daniel as proof that the fatal shooting of Price Daniel Jan. 19 was accidental and not intentional.

However, Wilborn said he plans to prosecute the case in October as planned "unless the defense can show me some evidence to make me think different."

Daniel is spending the weekend with all four of her children for the first time since Jan. 19. She said she was elated with the jury's decision to let her retain complete custody of Franklin, 3, and Marion Price "Bob" IV, 1. She is planning to move to Baytown to be near her family.

Her other two children, Kimberly, 12, and Jonathon, 11, live with their father Larry Moore and Kenefick, a small community near Baytown.

Daniel is fighting Moore for custody of Kimberly, but Friend said "we are going to work the matter out." Moore filed suit to gain custody of Kimberly in February.

"There will not be a trial now and probably never will be," Friend said.

He said it would not be able to move the girl from school now, but he hoped to work out a visitation agreement between Moore and Daniel.

Soviets try to play catch-up with new satellite launching

United Press International

HOUSTON — The Soviet launching of a satellite may be a first step in a Russian attempt to establish a permanent space station, a Soviet need that has acquired urgency because of the success of America's space shuttle, a scientist specializing in the Soviet space mission said Sunday.

Jim Oberg, an engineer with McDonnell-Douglas Corp.'s space program, said that amateur radio operators in Europe and North America had tracked the Cosmos 1267, which the official Tass news agency said was launched Saturday, through an orbit bringing it close to the manned Salyut 6 space station.

"It could be a prototype of a new space station or it could be a small space shuttle, much smaller than our Columbia," Oberg said. "We must watch the developments for several more days to know what its mission is. It may well be their (Soviets) answer to our space shuttle program. I must stress that I'm only speaking for a private research group and not for any official agency."

The official Soviet news agency, Tass, released no information about the launching other than to say it was functioning normally and was a Cosmos series satellite.

Oberg said the Cosmos launch, which he believes is on a more sophisticated mission than indicated by a routine Soviet announcement, has been sending signals similar to an earlier flight and appeared to have the capability to link with Salyut 6.

Maj. Cliff Zacharias, assigned to the North American Air Defense Command in Colorado, said NORAD headquarters inside Cheyenne Mountain was tracking Cosmos-1267 "on a routine basis."

"The command director told me it's considered a standard Soviet scientific launch at this point," Zacharias said. "They are not prepared to say if it's going to tie up with Salyut 6.

"We cannot verify that with the data that is available to us right now," he said.

Oberg stressed that the size and manner of launch was an assumption based on the similarity of radio signals emanating from Saturday's launch.

He said he'd received his information from the Kettering Group, an England-based network of amateur space enthusiasts, which said signals were being monitored in Sweden, England, Florida and Texas.

Oberg ruled out any military application for the latest launch, which he said had been suggested in some quarters.

"They already have an military satellite system under another program and it does not make sense to duplicate that," he said. Olberg. "My strongest suspicion is that it is connected with a new space station. The Soviets have explicitly promised to build a permanent space station for around-the-clock, year-round operation in the near future."

Noting that the U.S. and the Soviet Union are following parallel paths in the use of space flights, Oberg said the Soviets need to prolong the life span of their space vehicles, most of which operate for several weeks or months compared to American space vehicles which last for years.

"Our space ships have the capability to reach Jupiter, Saturn and Mercury whereas their space ships can only reach Venus," he said. "Even Mars is beyond their technical capability.

"The next logical step for us, therefore, is to expand the achievement of Columbia."

Fans and friends gather at Wills Day celebration

United Press International

TURKEY — About 2,500 friends, fans and former Texas Playboys gathered Saturday to honor the late Bob Wills, who left his barber's chair in Turkey and went on to popularize his own brand of country music that came to be known as Western swing.

"In Turkey, Bob means more to those people than the queen does to England," said Al Strickland, Wills' long-time "piano-pounder."

Strickland was one of 25 former members of Wills' band that spread Western swing — an eclectic combination of black blues, Dixieland jazz and hillbilly music — in the 1930s and 1940s. Wills' songs were punctuated by his trademark "ah ha" hollers.

Saturday's 10th annual Bob Wills Day — the largest reunion of former band members since Wills died in 1975 — was highlighted by the Playboys' performance of old Wills' standards like "Faded Love," "Rose of San Antone" and "Milk Cow Blues."

Most of Turkey's population of 600 closed stores and deserted downtown to see the performance at the Bob Wills Center, an old high school converted to house Wills' memorabilia. Townsfolk held a barbecue, parade and fiddlers' contest earlier in the day.

The center is maintained by the Bob Wills Foundation, which raises its money through the annual festivals and has erected a tall granite monument in town that's topped with two big fiddles and bows and broadcasts Wills' music.

The fans included a mixture of young people and old timers, including Jim Garner, a Turkey native who knew Wills when Wills was known as Jim Bob.

"My daddy told Jim Bob to go down to Fort Worth, that you (Wills) could beat all those old boys fiddling," Garner said. "Daddy bought him a bus ticket and gave him a $5 bill to head out with.

"To tell you the truth, for this community, he was Elvis Presley."

One long-time fan drove 130 miles from Gruver, Texas for the show.

"I came because I'm an old fiddler," said Otis Gammill. "I've been to a lot of his dances. He played my kind of music — country Western with good old time fiddling, breakdowns and waltzes."

In Fort Worth, Wills was an original member of the Light Crust Doughboys, a country group sponsored by Light Crust Flour. But Wills, not content with standard country music, was seeking his own style of music and eventually created swing.

"Above all else, he wanted to be different," said Leon McAuliffe, Wills' original steel guitar player. "He was an innovater."

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