

National

Court upholds railroad merger

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court Tuesday turned down a challenge to the merger of the nation's largest railroad, Burlington Northern, and the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway.

The justices let stand a federal appeals court ruling that the Interstate Commerce Commission properly considered the public benefit, rather than the consequences to other railroads or railroad workers, in approving the merger.

The \$350 million merger came in November after several months of delay initiated by the competing Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway — known as Katy. A subsidiary of Katy Industries, the railroad is a 2,200-mile line operating in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

The merger combined Burlington Northern's 24,500 miles of track with the 4,600 owned by Frisco to create the nation's longest rail network, extending Burlington Northern's service from 19 midwestern and western

states into the southwest.

But Katy, describing itself as in a "marginal financial position," said competition from the merger would cost it \$8.7 million annually, causing it to curtail maintenance, cut back on service and delay rate adjustments for its customers.

The ICC approved the merger on grounds it would benefit the public without cutting down on essential services and it would not reduce competition.

The commission also rebuffed the Railway Labor Executives' Association's request for employment protection for workers whose jobs might be eliminated because of the merger.

Katy appealed the decision, criticizing the ICC for the use of an "essential services" standard to determine whether to approve the merger.

But the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the ICC's action, holding the commission acted in the public interest in approving the merger.

New test may aid lung patients

United Press International

RICHMOND, Va. — A new test involving injection of a radioactive substance may help doctors treat many of the 150,000 people nationwide who each year suffer from severe respiratory ailments.

The test — radioactive tracing — was the brainchild of Dr. Harvey Sugerman, an assistant professor of surgery at the Medical College of Virginia.

Half of the 150,000 patients who suffer severe breathing difficulties each year die when their lungs fill with fluid, medical statistics show. Doctors often were frustrated in their attempts to save more patients because no effective method existed for measuring the amount of fluid in the lungs.

In Sugerman's test, similar to tracing tests used on other parts of the body, a patient is injected with a mildly radioactive dose of a substance called albumin.

The albumin is pumped into blood vessels of the lungs. If capillaries of the lungs are leaking substances from the bloodstream, the radioactive albumin will leak out with them into surrounding tissue. A device called the Gamma camera is then able to detect the amount of fluid in the lungs.

The test can be used on patients hospitalized in intensive care units with maladies as diverse as massive infection or drug overdose.

"This test gives us a marker to determine how much and how long capillaries are leaking," Sugerman said. "It gives us a way to find the best therapeutic regimen including respirators and drugs."

Sugerman said the hour-long test had been used successfully on 16 patients at the Medical College of Virginia Hospital. Doctors at the Medical College of South Carolina also have used the test on four patients with favorable results.

Sugerman, who earlier demonstrated the procedure on laboratory animals, has been developing the test since 1978 in conjunction with Drs. James Tatum and Jerry Hirsch.

Soviets warships increase as U.S. carriers arrive

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon said Tuesday the Soviet Union has moved more warships into the Mediterranean Sea since the arrival in the area of a U.S. battle group led by the aircraft carrier Independence.

"There has been an increase in the number of Soviet vessels" from 32 to 39 since Thursday, Pentagon spokesman Henry Catto told reporters.

But, he said, "there have been no unusual patterns" in the movement of Soviet warships such as a buildup in the eastern Mediterranean. The Soviet Mediterranean fleet numbers between 35 and 45 vessels.

The Independence and two guided missile escort ships — the cruiser Yarnell and destroyer Adams —

entered the Mediterranean from the Suez Canal May 15 en route home to Virginia from six months in the Indian Ocean.

The task force was ordered into a holding pattern in the region in response to the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities between Syria and Israel over the Syrian positioning of Soviet anti-aircraft missiles in Lebanon.

Though Catto said the Independence was "going home with a little patience," defense sources said the 78,000-ton conventionally powered ship was on station south of Cyprus and about 200 miles from the Lebanese coast.

Nine more F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers, refueled in midair on a non-stop flight from the United States, joined the Independence last week, the sources said.

Raid uncovers counterfeit cash

United Press International

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — A Secret Service raid on a farmhouse uncovered a basement "mint" where counterfeiters printed \$1.5 million in bogus \$100 and \$20 bills and funneled them across the southeastern United States.

John T. Cook, special agent in charge of the Secret Service in Arkansas, said the raid Sunday yielded \$21,400 in counterfeit cash, printing plates and nega-

tives that could have been used to produce more phony money.

Secret Service agents in Mississippi provided a tip last week that led to an investigation and the raid on the farmhouse, in cooperation with Van Buren county law officials.

"This was no Mickey Mouse operation," Anglin said. "They were set up to do a lot more, and the money was really well done."

Imports help relieve peanut butter crisis

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The peanut butter crisis is ending. But whether prices of the sticky staple return to normal when supplies increase remains a question.

Last winter's shortage, caused by the drought of the previous summer, has been made up in large part by imports from countries such as India and China.

The need for imports is what made the prices escalate. They are moderating now, but whether the decline will continue won't be known until this summer and fall when the size of the 1981 U.S. peanut crop can be firmly assessed.

American farmers normally produce more than enough peanuts. When the crop size declined by 42 percent last winter, a shortfall was created for the first time in a generation.

Agriculture experts say signs point to a better crop this year. A March report on planting intentions indicated peanut farmers would plant 4 percent more acreage, and more irrigation is being used, particularly in Georgia.

Moisture supplies are low, however, and there is a shortage of seed, so the crop cannot be estimated until later in the year.

The first crop report will be issued by the Agriculture Department in August, with reports following in subsequent months. The most accurate figure will come in November.

"If there's an excellent harvest, I would guess that you'd see an improvement (in prices) by November," said James Mack of the Washington-based Peanut Butter and Nut Processors Association. "If the crop is poor, then we're really in trouble."

Ernie Moore, a spokesman for the Safeway stores in the Washington area, said 12-ounce jars of Peter Pan and Skippy now cost \$1.49. A year ago Peanut Pan cost \$1.15 and Skippy cost \$1.05.

But on March 1, both brands cost \$1.75 and some jar sizes were unavailable. Now the situation is "fairly good," Moore said. "We have a full supply on hand of all products."

Fast-draw granny captures burglar

United Press International

PHOENIX, Ariz. — A 77-year-old grandmother, fast on the draw with a .38-caliber revolver, nabbed a would-be burglar at her home and made him crouch down on all fours as she sipped a glass of bourbon and waited for police.

Gladys Kastensmith was awakened in her rocking chair Monday by a man trying to crawl through a doggie door in her home, police said. She coolly grabbed her revolver and fired three shots to scare him away. But the intruder boldly went to another door and got in the house, police said.

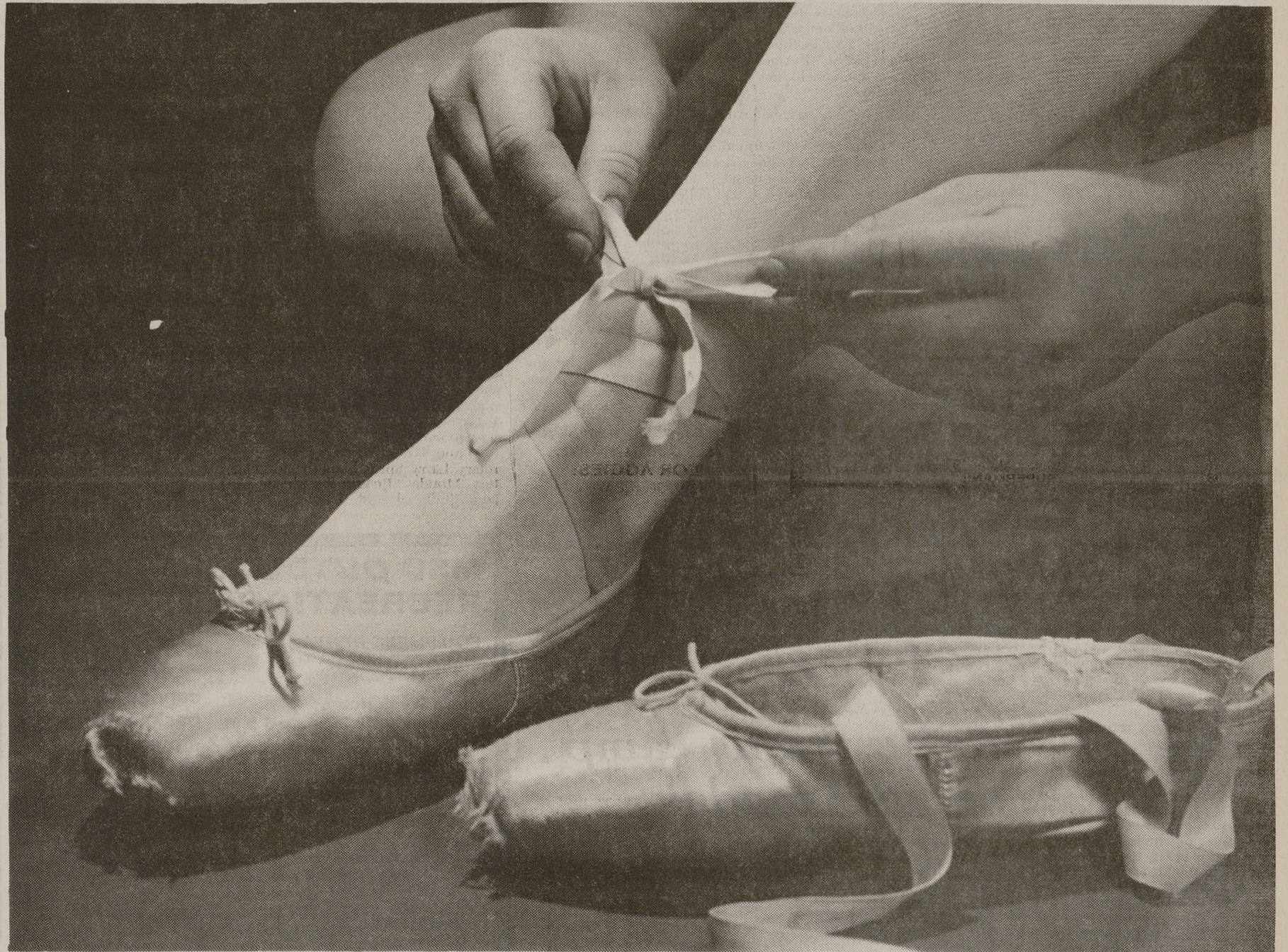
Kastensmith was waiting for him.

John Lynch, civilian supervisor for the police radio room, said he monitored the telephone call from the woman.

"She had him down on all fours and told him if he moved she'd shoot him," Lynch said. "He moved and she said (to police), 'Just a minute, honey' and then kablam!"

Lynch said the woman fired at least one shot at the man to keep him from moving while she talked to police. When police arrived, they found David Snead, 28, still on all fours while Kastensmith guarded him.

Snead was taken into custody.



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