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**State**

**Mother attempts suicide after sons returned to dad**

United Press International  
HOUSTON — A woman indicted for kidnapping her two sons attempted suicide within hours of a judge's decision that returned the boys to her former husband.

Harriet Berne, 37, was listed in critical condition and undergoing tests Tuesday night to determine whether she suffered brain damage when she took an overdose of prescription medicine earlier in the day.

Berne, who was using the name Judy King, was taken to Northshore Hospital where doctors treated her before she was taken by helicopter to Hermann Hospital.

"There's no way of knowing what she took," Dr. Charles Owens of Northshore Hospital said. "There was evidently a lot of medication around the house."

Just hours before Houston Fire Department paramedics discovered Berne unconscious and in respiratory arrest, a family court judge Bruce Wettman ordered her two sons, Scott, 11, and Mark, 7, be returned to their father, Dale Berne.

Berne charged his former wife stole the boys and turned them against him after moving to Texas in November.

Berne sat stunned after hearing Wettman's ruling. She hugged a friend and hurried from the courtroom, making no comment to reporters as she left.

The two boys burst into tears when they found out they were being returned to their father. Scott said, "Why don't you let us be with our mom? We asked her to take us."

A fire department spokesman said the paramedics who took Berne to Northshore did not find a suicide note.

Berne, who was to have started teaching in the Houston Independent School District this week, was free on \$5,000 bond and facing extradition to New York.

She was indicted there on charges of custodial interference for allegedly stealing the boys after New York court had awarded them to Berne.

She was also facing federal charges of unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

Berne's landlord, Bailey Adams, said he saw her "sitting as if in a trance" when he went to his house to do some maintenance work.

"It was strange," Adams said. "Normally, she's so talkative."

Berne's father, Al Zilber, said, "She just said, 'I can't live without my children.' She was so depressed. Obviously, a woman who loves her children so much can't be a bad mother."

"She said she was going to take down and take a nap. I was in the other room and never thought she would do anything so foolish."

A friend said Zilber left his house to buy sandwiches. He returned and offered one to Berne. She took one bite and keeled over in her bed, Zilber said.

"This was the week of the weeks," Zilber said.

"We lost the kids. It cost a fortune (in lawyers). Then they were taken off by him without being allowed to say goodbye to her."

"Why can't they (the courts) say, 'Children, with whom do you want to live?' She might have sacrificed her life (because of the courts)."

**Texans face cold winter due to oil, gas curtailment**

United Press International  
AUSTIN — Railroad Commissioner Jim Nugent said Wednesday that Texans could face curtailments of natural gas supplies this winter while Northeastern consumers will have more of the fuel available at a lower price.

Speaking at a capitol news conference, Nugent said that despite the biggest oil and gas exploration boom in the state's history, Texas is producing less gas and oil each year.

Complicating the situation, Nugent said, are federal regulations that increase the price and limit the availability of gas produced in the state to intrastate consumers.

"It has to do with the cost and availability of natural gas, and with the looming spectre of Texans living in the midst of rich gas fields," Nugent said.

Nugent said Texans are unable to get adequate supplies while paying high prices for the privilege of doing without the gas.

According to Nugent, the expected decontrol of gas prices in 1985 will only affect about 60 percent of U.S. natural gas. Under current plans for decontrol, Nugent said, the majority of the controlled, low-price gas will go to interstate customers.

"Unless the NGPA (Natural Gas Policy Act) is changed, 1985 will usher in a new era of unequal prices and unequal access to new supplies," Nugent said, "and the Texas consumer will bear the brunt of the inequities."

Under the NGPA, interstate gas discovered before April 20, 1977 termed "old gas," will sell for \$1.01 a metric cubic foot in 1985. However, old intrastate gas will cost \$3.29 per metric cubic foot.

"If Texans are to burn Texas

gas, they will have to pay more than the free market price because they will be subsidizing the costs to consumers in other parts, particularly the Northeast," Nugent said.

Further complicating the problem are federal regulations that prohibit intrastate pipelines from bidding on new gas produced in the Outer Continental Shelf where large quantities have been found in recent years.

Nugent said that advisers to the Railroad Commission warned there is no surplus of intrastate gas this year and that a severe winter could force service curtailments.

Nugent has urged the congressional delegation to fight against the inequities between interstate and intrastate pricing by having a reconsideration of the NGPA.

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