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Hearing set in oil mishandling case

United Press International
ABILENE — A federal judge has ordered a hearing today for two west Texas oil men who claim that the Department of Energy breached an agreement not to oppose their parole from the federal prison camp at Big Spring.

The men have requested a restraining order preventing DOE

officials from opposing their parole.

U.S. District Judge Hal O. Woodward Wednesday granted the hearing request for John T. Troland and David W. Ratliff, both of Abilene.

The pair, who are serving 14-month sentences for convictions of mis-certifying oil, claimed the fed-

eral agency had promised not to oppose their release in return for information about the southwest oil industry market.

The DOE's subsequent decision to oppose their release from custody constitutes a "breach of a bargained agreement," the two oilmen said in their request.

Attorneys for the two men pointed out that as a result of their

cooperation with the DOE, the pair would find it difficult to find employment in the oil industry and that their cooperation with the federal government "might even pose a physical threat to both of these gentlemen and their families."

Toland and Ratliff received 14-month prison sentences and \$10,000 fines on their oil mis-

certification conviction in an April 17 hearing in a Tulsa, Okla., district court.

The two men said in the restraining order request that they profited only by about \$5,800 in the fraudulent oil transaction. Their case was part of wider investigation by the DOE of oil marketing in the Southwest.

They said they "answered DOE

questions" for about 10 hours Aug. 26 and Aug. 31 in interviews at the Big Spring federal prison camp and at Midland.

Woodward said he would hear arguments today from federal attorneys and defense attorneys in his chambers at Lubbock.

The Parol Commission hearing for the two men is scheduled Tuesday at the Big Spring federal

We're



Back!

Typhoid outbreak attributed to two restaurant employees

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Health officials have identified two employees of a popular Mexican food restaurant as possible carriers of typhoid, although neither has displayed any symptoms of the disease, spokesmen said.

With 47 typhoid cases reported as of Wednesday, health officials said they expected several more cases to surface due to the long incubation period of salmonella

typhi — about one to four weeks.

The two workers at La Frontera molino — described as being like a delicatessen — have been found to have the same strain of salmonella typhi organisms found in eight of the typhoid fever cases.

Neither employee has yet exhibited signs of illness. However, it is possible for people to carry typhoid and infect others without becoming ill themselves, as in the case of Typhoid Mary — a New

York cook believed responsible for spreading the disease in the 1920s.

Dr. Courand N. Rothe, head of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, said Wednesday confirmation of the bacteria in the two employees came from the Texas Department of Health in Austin.

"These organisms were identified in stool cultures and their presence serves to confirm the evidence accumulated which led to closure of the molino on Sept. 27," Rothe said in a statement. "These two employees will be referred for medical evaluation and treatment."

Rothe said tests still were under way on food samples taken at the time the popular westside molino was closed Sunday.

Although one of the molino's specialties is a delicacy known as Barbacoa — a dish made with beef

heads and jowls — authorities have not confirmed it was responsible for the typhoid outbreak.

"The bacteriological findings of the two employees established they had contact with typhoid bacteria. They could have become infected with the organisms by eating food prepared at the molino the same way as some patients were infected," Rothe said.

Authorities also have not determined whether food prepared at the molino or food brought in the facility could also have contributed to the typhoid outbreak.

Officials also said it was possible the two employees might contract the disease.

Typhoid generally is transmitted by improper hygiene but, officials say all health regulations were being followed at the molino before it was closed. Contact brief as a handshake can also result in transmission of the disease.

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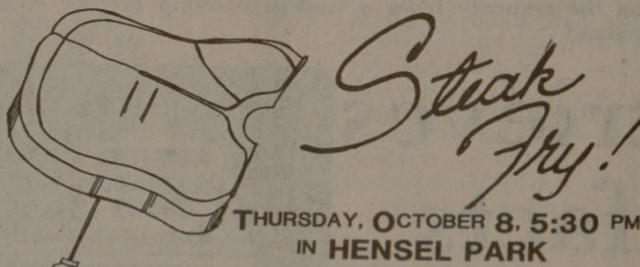
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Producers call gas rule harmful

United Press International
LUBBOCK — Independent oil producers feel that an adverse ruling in their battle with Phillips Petroleum Co. over the categorizing of certain natural gas liquids could harm all levels of the Texas Panhandle's economy, a Lubbock attorney said Wednesday.

At issue is whether or not independent operators can include what Phillips calls natural gas liquids in oil production reports to the Texas Railroad Commission.

According to Railroad Commission rules, a well that produces less than one barrel of oil for each 100,000 feet of natural gas is considered a gas well. Current field spacing rules stipulate only one gas well can be produced on a 640-acre block, but 10 oil wells can be produced on the same acreage.

If Phillips is successful in restricting independent operators from reporting natural gas — which often comes out of the ground as a liquid condensate — as part of their oil production, then many wells in the Panhandle Field would be considered gas wells. The result, the attorney

said, would be the plugging of nine of every ten wells per acre block.

"Pipe manufacturers, mud engineering companies, people who prepare (drilling) locations and even the merchants of towns in the area would be affected," Lubbock attorney Bill Warnick said.

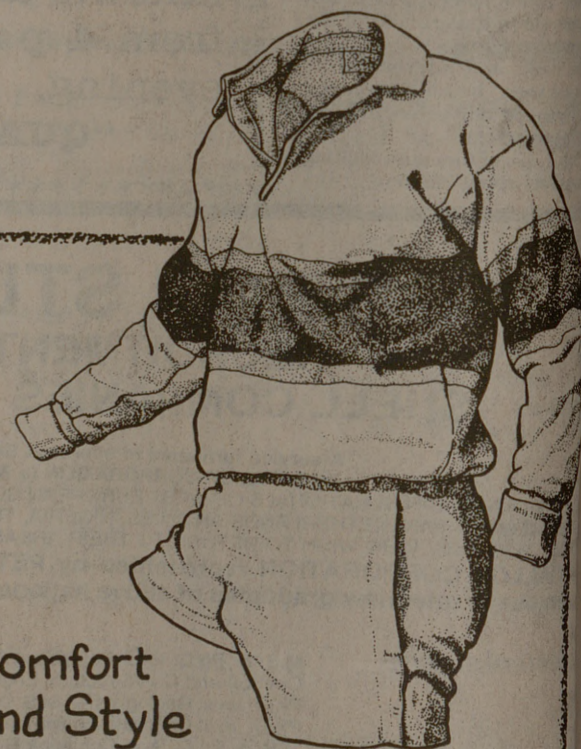
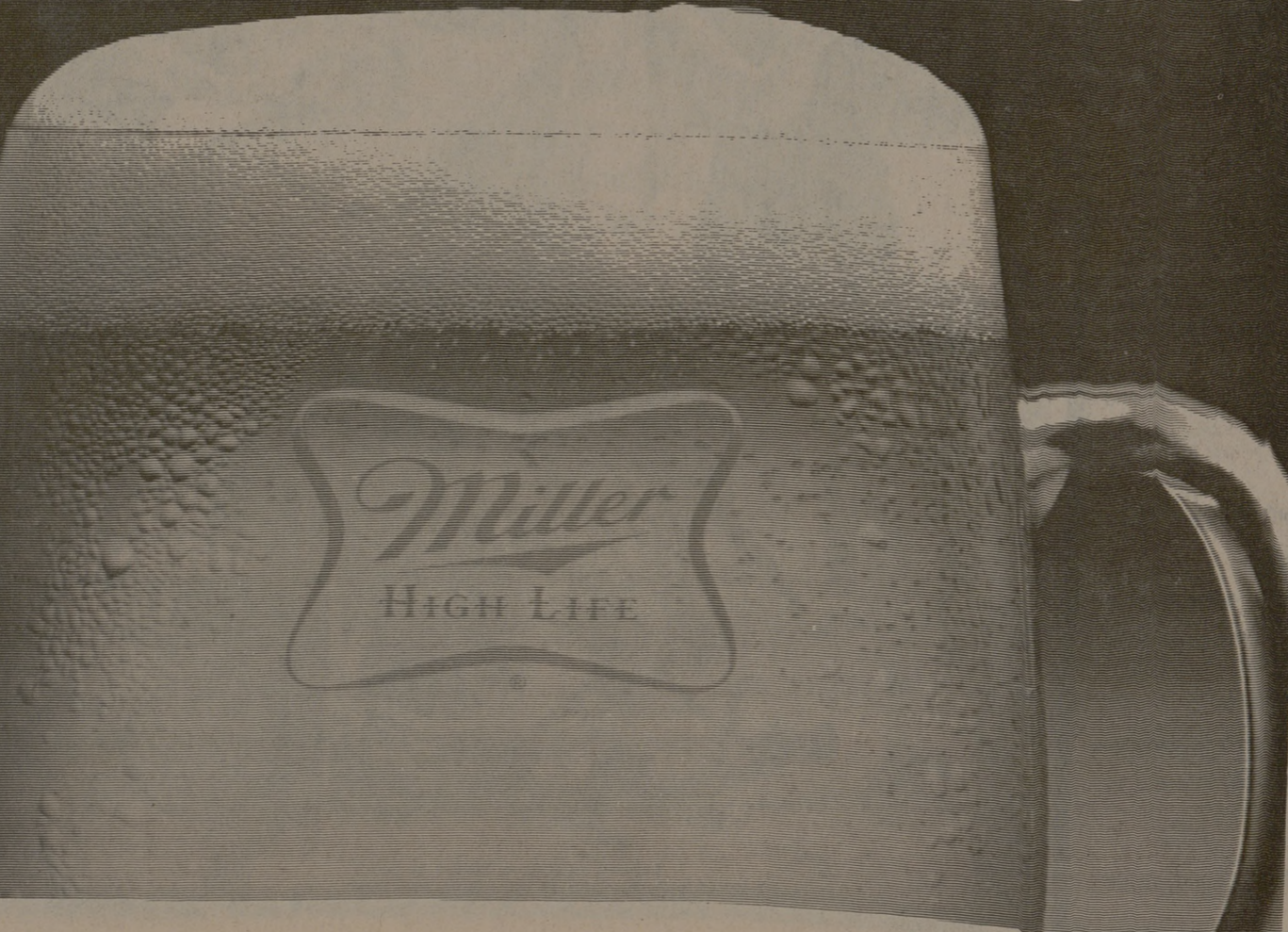
"This multiplier effect would be devastating to the Panhandle."

The ruling will only affect the Panhandle Field, which includes parts of Potter, Moore, Hutchinson, Gray, Wheeler and Comanche counties.

Warnick said such a situation would leave valuable oil in the ground at a time when the country needs it and make it difficult to produce the oil later — after the gas is depleted — because of high-pressure natural gas being pumped out of the ground.

The independents have hired Warnick and Austin attorney Lee Hafley to represent them at an Oct. 27 Railroad Commission hearing, in which Phillips is expected to ask for an amendment of field rules.

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