

Trucker fined for giving ride

AMARILLO — A truck driver says he learned that helping stranded people along the highway can be more costly than just the time it takes to give them a ride.

Tom Sweeney, 41, of Hereford got a \$100 ticket last week for picking up two stranded motorists in Arizona.

"I was just trying to help somebody out," he said. "If that makes me a bad guy, that's just how it's got to be."

Sweeney said he was traveling between Flagstaff and Holbrook, Ariz., Wednesday at about 7 a.m. when he spotted a man and a woman in a rest area about 15 miles from Flagstaff.

"It was cold, below 20 degrees," he said. "They were

shivering from the cold. I took them into the cab and gave them some coffee to warm them up."

Sweeney said the pair apparently had suitcases but no vehicle.

Sweeney said when he let the pair out of the cab, an Arizona highway patrolman presented him a \$100 ticket for carrying unauthorized passengers.

Arizona highway patrol superintendent Ed Ray said the situation sounded like a misunderstanding.

"The Arizona highway patrol absolutely does not ticket truck drivers who carry passengers in what is obviously an emergency situation," Ray said. "Even our patrolmen do that (take stranded travelers to help)."

Local Eastern Onion entertains

Messenger loves singing her tune

by Kathy Wiesepepe

Battalion Reporter

Janus Retterer slips into the doctors' office, tiptoes to the front desk and whispers to the nurse. The people in the waiting room stare and giggle as she waits patiently and pretends she's not a novelty. But as soon as the doctor enters the room, her quiet manner disappears.

"Eastern Onion singing telegram!" she announces in a circus barker's voice, before blowing a piercing siren whistle.

In honor of Valentine's Day, she's dressed in red and white tights and a huge stuffed silk heart costume, with a red heart painted on her cheek. She's flashy — from her rainbow earrings and black sequined bow tie to her white high-topped sneakers with red sequined stripes.

Retterer places a bright red party hat on the doctor's head

and launches into a Valentine's tune, accompanied by the cymbals of her wind-up monkey.

To most people, she's something of a clown, an actress who entertains and then disappears. But there's a real person behind the smiles and songs.

"You can't be up all the time," Retterer said. Sometimes she's down and the last thing she feels like doing is smiling, singing and dancing, she said. But even if she's having a bad day, making people happy cheers her up.

That's the best part of her job, she said. Every group is different, and she never knows what kind of reaction she'll get.

"Some people laugh so hard they cry," she said. Some have been nervous and almost afraid of her, some have been bold and some have even been downright rude.

"But for the most part they

enjoy it," she said. "I don't think I was embarrassed very many times. If someone delivered one to me, I'd be embarrassed. But when I'm giving one, it's like being an actor. I'm performing."

But she does remember one bad experience.

"I wasn't embarrassed for me, but for the person I was singing to," Retterer said. The recipient, she said, would not cooperate. He was in a restaurant and he wouldn't stand up, smile or acknowledge that he was the person she was singing for, she said.

"I really felt sorry for the people who had paid for the telegram for him," she said.

Retterer has enjoyed most of her assignments, she said. Some of her favorites include delivering a telegram to the A&M Consolidated High School football team from the cheerleaders at

their pep rally; singing to a veterinarian while he was operating on a cat; and delivering a "belly-gram," complete with a belly dancer, to one of the Texas A&M baseball pitchers on the baseball field during practice.

The belly-grams and macho-man-a-grams come with a singing messenger and either a belly dancer or a male dancer.

They're the most expensive telegrams offered by Eastern Onion. Retterer said they're also the most fun to deliver.

When she's delivering a belly-gram, Retterer said, she sings the message first to "set them up for the dancer."

Then, when the person is thinking that the embarrassment is over, she turns on her tape recorder and in comes the belly dancer.

Eastern Onion offers songs for every occasion, Retterer

said.

"People can write their own messages, but they usually don't need to," she said. "We have songs for everything — birthday songs, divorce songs, I love you, I hate you, we just bought a home, I want your business, please give me a job — everything anyone could possibly think of."

"Some people have tried this and just couldn't take it," she said. "I guess you have to be pretty crazy."

But Retterer said she loves her job. Her bright blue eyes shine and she smiles broadly as she finishes out the song.

"You'll gain a lot of weight from all the sweets you ate, but thank your stars above, now that there's more to love. Oh, Happy Valentine's!"

Deal with extortionist may be dismissed

HOUSTON — A co-defendant in the \$15 million Gulf Oil Chemicals Co. extortion case says the alleged mastermind knew all five bombs planted at a Houston area plant had been found before he began negotiating with authorities.

Timothy Justice, 30, testified Monday before U.S. District Judge Gabrielle McDonald in a pre-trial hearing on motions to suppress evidence against all five Colorado defendants and to

dismiss charges against co-defendant Jill Bird.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ron Woods contends a deal federal agents made with Bird's common-law husband and alleged ringleader, John McBride, 46, should not be honored because McBride was not honest with federal agents.

The deal for Bird's dismissal from the case called for McBride to tell agents where other bombs were. But Woods argues McBride knew there were no

more bombs to be found when he made the deal, so it cannot be binding.

Justice testified McBride — who stayed in Durango, Colo., while Justice and others went to plant bombs and mail a letter demanding \$15 million — had heard newscasts all five bombs put in Gulf's Cedar Bayou plant were found Sept. 28.

Justice said that in a meeting with McBride in Durango Oct. 1 — after the bombs were found but before McBride negotiated with authorities — Justice affirmed for McBride what was said in the newscasts.

"I said they had found all five," Justice said. "He said it

didn't make any difference because they still believe there's more (because of the extortion letter saying there were 10)."

Defense lawyers are asking Judge McDonald to enforce the deal and dismiss Bird from the case because, they say, federal agents got what they wanted from McBride, namely, an assurance that there were no other bombs.

The judge deferred ruling on all 40 pre-trial motions and ordered attorneys to submit briefs by Friday. No trial date has been set.

Justice has agreed to testify against his four co-defendants in exchange for dismissal of 10

of 12 counts against him in the case. He could receive as much as 15 years in prison on his guilty plea to those two remaining counts.

The bombs were found and rendered harmless. No payoff was made.

Rare books found in UT buy

AUSTIN — University of Texas researchers have found two rare books among the Gloria Swanson archives purchased by the university in 1982, UT officials said.

Decherd Turner, director of the Humanities Research Center, said "Jim's Book: A Collection of Poems and Short Stories," by James Merrill, and a first edition of James Joyce's "Ulysses" were discovered in December.

"Jim's Book," is one of the most difficult of Merrill's books to find since there were only 200 copies printed in the early 1940s, said Turner. The copy of "Ulysses" is one of the first 1,000 editions printed in 1922.

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