

state

State Capitol fire blamed on TV set

United Press International
AUSTIN — State Attorney General Jim Mattox Monday blamed a defective television set for the Feb. 6 fire in the east wing of the State Capitol which killed one and injured seven.

Mattox said his office will file a products liability damage suit against the manufacturer and retailer of the faulty television set.

The television set was manufactured by Zenith Radio Corp. and purchased new by the Senate on Oct. 26,

1982, from G&M Television Inc. in Austin, Mattox said.

He said evidence gathered during his investigation of the blaze which began in Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby's apartment indicates that the fire originated in the one corner of the library and spread to other areas.

A guest in the apartment was killed in the fire which injured six firefighters and one security guard. Hobby's daughter, Kate, and two other guests were able to flee the apartment.

Damage to the building was estimated at \$500,000.

"The television set was the only electrical appliance located in that corner of the library," Mattox said. "According to our investigation, the fire burned through the 8-foot ceiling of the library up to the old 18-foot ceiling," he said.

Three weeks after the fire, the Legislature approved a \$7 million appropriation to repair the damage and begin restoration work.

EPA charged with coverup

United Press International
DALLAS — Environmental Protection Agency officials covered up lead contamination problems in two Dallas neighborhoods in 1981, a former employee charged.

Dr. Bill McAnalley, an EPA toxicologist from 1979 to 1981, Sunday said he had advised EPA officials in Dallas and in Washington that an immediate cleanup was needed in areas near smelters in West Dallas and East Oak Cliff.

"It's obvious that they covered it up," McAnalley said, "there's no question in my mind."

One West Dallas smelter firm voluntarily cleaned some contaminated areas, but the EPA has not indicated the need for a full scale cleanup of either that area or the one in Oak Cliff.

Allyn Davis, the EPA's Dallas area official who coordinated much of the agency's study of lead contamination in the city, said he would not comment on McAnalley's charges until an investigation of the EPA is completed by congressional committees.

Medical experts have linked lead contamination to learning disabilities in children.

Rep. Elliott Levitas, D-Ga., said over the weekend his subcommittee will begin hearings this week on the EPA's alleged effort to abort a voluntary cleanup of lead-contaminated soil in the Dallas area.

Levitas charged that documents and interviews reveal the EPA halted a cleanup of soil which had levels of lead 50 times higher than the allowable limit, even though children were suffering from lead poisoning. He accused acting EPA administrator John Hernandez of delaying cleanup of lead contaminated soil near the RSR Corp. facility and another smelter, Dixie Lead Co., for 18 months.

Hernandez, who served as deputy director of the agency under Anne Burford, replaced the controversial EPA chief when she resigned two weeks ago.

Toy use, not design held accident cause

United Press International
DALLAS — A toy manufacturing official says the most defective items in America's toy stores are the parents who buy them.

Doug Thomson, president of the New York based Toy Manufacturing Association, says a lack of wisdom in buying toys and a lack of supervision when children play with them led to more accidents than defects in the toys themselves.

"We've dealt with this issue (toy safety) for five years in the TMA, and I'm convinced it is no issue at all," Thomson said at the opening seminar of the Dallas Toy Show Sunday. "Most manufacturers have well designed, safe toys that meet (Consumer Product Safety Commission) standards."

"The issue is not toy design but toy use, and the commission is beginning to see that, too. It is beginning to look at how toys are selected by parents and what happens to them in the child's hands."

Thomson said he felt some

parents were not using good judgment in selecting toys for their children based on manufacturers' age recommendations. He said, for instance, a parent of a 3-year-old might buy a toy suggested for 5- to 8-year-olds with the idea the child will grow into it.

He said, however, toys manufactured for 3-year-olds are designed so parts cannot be broken off and swallowed, but that toys for older children have more sophisticated designs that could be a hazard if played with by a younger child.

"You should not give a young child an older child's toy," he said.

Thomson said parent supervision was the key in families with children of varying ages. He said parents should do better at making sure youngsters are not left alone for long periods in which they could get themselves into trouble.

As an example, he indicated that by later this year companies producing toy chests may be required to equip the lids with

springloaded hinges. He said recently the CPSC had received reports of babies falling into toy chests and having the lid fall down and entrap them.

"The answer is keeping young children from being alone in a room, unsupervised, for extended periods," he said.

Nevertheless, as a result of those accidents, Thomson said, about 84 percent of America's toy manufacturers already were putting 67-cent spring hinges on boxes to prevent lids from falling accidentally. He said by November he expected 100 percent voluntary compliance.

Thomson also complained that while most defective toys in the \$6 billion wholesale industry could be traced to foreign producers, the vast majority of the product safety enforcement rests with domestic companies.

He said of the 41 recent recalls of defective toys, all but a few involved toys produced in Korea, Hong Kong or Shanghai, China, that were not produced according to American standards.

Brutality witness accuses police

United Press International
DALLAS — A New Orleans policeman says a man who claims his civil rights were bridged asked to be taken into custody in handcuffs so his neighbors would not realize he was helping in the investigation of an officer's slaying.

Stephen Reboul, 29, was the third defendant to testify in the federal trial of seven white New Orleans officers accused of conspiracy to beat and illegally jail potential witnesses.

Reboul told the jury last week he accompanied three other officers to the Algiers home of Johnny Brownlee the night of Nov. 11, 1980, three days after patrolman Gregory Neupert was shot to death.

Brownlee lived down the block from where Neupert died, and police had been told he might have witnessed the shooting.

"I had the impression that he (Brownlee) definitely knew why we were there, and he wanted to go," Reboul said.

"But he was so scared, he asked us to put some handcuffs

on him," Reboul said he never saw Brownlee again after taking him to headquarters, except in court.

Brownlee last week testified that a group of officers dragged him from his home, beat him at headquarters and took him to the woods south of Algiers to beat him some more. He identified Reboul as having struck him across the face with a pistol in the woods.

Brownlee said he lied to stop the beatings, telling officers he had seen two men near Neupert's patrol car. Those two men were among four people killed by police during arrest raids in the following week.

Police defendants John McKenzie and Ronald Brink testified last week that they never saw anyone beaten.

Each officer could be sentenced to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine if convicted of felony conspiracy. In addition, each is charged with at least one count of deprivation of rights, a misdemeanor that carries a penalty of one year in prison and a \$1,000 fine.

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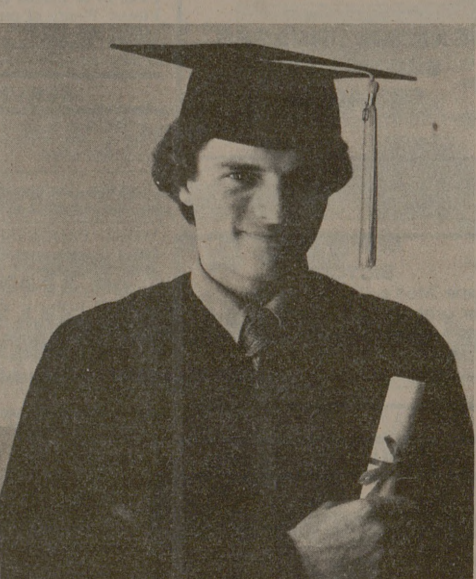
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