

# Chili cookoff founder dies in sleep Monday

**United Press International**  
DALLAS — Frank X. Tolbert, a journalist who staged the world's first chili cookoff in a remote Texas desert town 17 years ago, died in his sleep at the age of 72, a business associate said Tuesday.

Tolbert died Monday night. A spokesman for the family said the body would be cremated and no services were planned.

"He died in his sleep," said Blair Knouse, who, along with her husband and Tolbert, owned Tolbert's Texas Chili Parlor, a landmark Dallas restaurant.

"His heart just stopped," she said.

A folksy native of rural Roberts County in the Panhandle, Tolbert wrote a column in the Dallas Morning News for several decades. Although he officially retired in 1977, he still wrote one column a week until his death.

Tolbert had recently published his eighth book, "Tolbert's Texas."

The Original World Championship Chili Cookoff was started in the barren Big Bend town of Terlingua 17 years ago to promote Tolbert's latest book, "A Bowl of Red."

The craze grew to immense proportions, leading to today's more than 2,000 chili cookoffs worldwide.

Tolbert traveled to many of them, usually wearing his trademark string tie and cowboy hat.

In an interview last fall, he said he had cooked reindeer chili in Lapland and brewed batches in the South Seas and in Sorrento, Italy.

"I first learned to be a good chuckwagon cook from my dad," he said. "My mother never was much of a cook."

Sam Lewis, a San Angelo public relations man and a longtime friend of Tolbert's, said the two met when Lewis was a cowhand for the 6666 ranch near Guthrie and Tolbert was working at another Panhandle ranch.

"He was a Texan through and through, a genuine Texan," said Lewis, inventor of the jalapeno lollipop and president of the World Armadillo Breeding and Racing Association.

Lewis, who is a director of the World Championship Chili Cookoff, said he was one of only a handful of people who had attended every one of the Terlingua cookoffs.

"I just stumbled into that first one. I'd been in Mexico going through some of the old mines and was on my way back. I stopped at the store there in Terlingua and saw all these cars parked over at the ghost town. I thought they must be having a funeral or reopening the mercury mines."

"But it was this chili cookoff."

Lewis said no one could have foretold that such cookoffs would become commonplace all over the country.

"We knew they were fun and that there'd be another one," he said.

Even Tolbert did not realize how big the chili craze would become.

"All this chili stuff has sort of obscured my reputation as a Texas historian," Tolbert lamented. "My daughter and I were judging a cookoff at Lake Tahoe and the chambermaid said 'hello, Mr. Chili.' Gary Coleman, the child actor, did the same thing."

"They don't know my name, but they know who I am. But it doesn't matter that more people know me for my chili," he said. "I never did want to be an academic type anyway."

Tolbert said the only journalism course he took at the University of Texas was headline writing, and that was only because it fit conveniently into his schedule.

He was told later that Walter Cronkite and former first lady Lady Bird Johnson were in the same class, but Tolbert said he never noticed them.

"I majored in anthropology in college and I think it was a pretty good course for a journalist," he said.

"You learn about other races of people, and I think it takes away a lot of your prejudices because you find out almost all people are the same really," Tolbert said. "It made me more sympathetic to them. I sort of majored in the Comanches."

# 10-hour sky chase unveils 1,800 pounds of marijuana

**United Press International**  
DENVER — A U.S. Customs pilot Tuesday described a dramatic 10-hour chase which took place in the skies above Colorado as he and another pilot tried to force down a plane suspected of smuggling Mexican marijuana into the state.

Pilot Chuck Boucher said the pilot of the plane tried three times to ram his Cessna during Monday's chase, and at one point the planes came within three feet of colliding.

The twin-engine Queen Air Beechcraft was finally forced down at the rural Animas Air Park, about five miles south of Durango. Aboard, customs agents found 1,800 pounds of Mexican marijuana packed in approximately 60 cartons. The pilot, however, had fled.

Customs agents said the plane had run out of gas.

Boucher said the chase almost came to a fiery end when the unknown pilot tried to ram him.

"He came at us at first, and I thought he was going to turn and head south, but he got within three or four feet of us, and we had to do some aerobatics to get away from him," Boucher said.

U.S. Attorney Robert Miller and customs special agent Gary Hillberry, who held a plane-side news conference formally

announcing the seizure Tuesday, said the plane was well maintained and carried expensive radio equipment. The plane was valued at \$65,000.

The marijuana was packed loosely in cartons marked "fresh eggs" in Spanish.

Federal officials were checking the plane's registry with the Federal Aviation Administration, but could confirm nothing except that the plane was not stolen.

Verifying ownership would take time, they said, because ownership records sometimes are four to six months old.

The customs officials said the

plane had been under scrutiny for about six months.

The plane was flown Tuesday from Durango to Stapleton International Airport where it was unloaded. The contents were turned over to the U.S. Customs port director.

Joe Beaver, a U.S. Customs officer based in El Paso, Texas, said he was confident that a search of the plane would turn up evidence leading to the pilot.

The plane left a location in southeastern Colorado early Monday, Beaver said, and flew into Mexico. At about 11 a.m. Monday, it once again crossed

the boarder into the United States near Deming, N.M.

He said the seized marijuana was an average haul worth an estimated \$750,000.

"We took up the chase and flew over New Mexico for quite some time, finally landing at Durango about 5 p.m.," said Beaver.

Frank said the plane was believed to belong to "a drug smuggling community based out of California," but Beaver said the marijuana probably was headed back to southeastern Colorado.

# Public concern prompting tests on state water supplies

**United Press International**  
AUSTIN — The Texas Health Department said Tuesday it is testing water supplies across the state for the cancer-causing chemical EDB because of public concern and not because it suspects any drinking water is contaminated.

C.K. Foster, chief of the agency's Bureau of Environmental Health, said 22 water samples are undergoing tests in Austin.

"I want to stress that the tests are being conducted because of the public concern over the presence of the chemical and not because we have any suspicion that EDB is in the water system," he said.

Foster added, "As a matter of fact, more than 100 water samples were tested last year and no EDB was found."

EDB, which stands for ethylene dibromide and is used as a fumigant, pesticide and preservative, has been found in

grain-based food products taken from Texas supermarket shelves.

Foster said the water samples taken were selected in a random manner to include both large and small towns, but he said health officials were especially interested in agricultural areas of Texas.

Results from the tests are expected to be announced Friday.

Water was sampled from systems in Lubbock, Bedford, Southlake, Durango, Round Rock, Georgetown, San Juan, Hidalgo, Gustine, Menard, Rosenberg, Richmond, Bullard, Jacksonville, Amarillo and Canyon.

Meanwhile, a Corpus Christi health official Tuesday said he would not change his buying habits until he gets more information on EDB.

Dr. Christopher Buttery, city-county health director, said although studies show EDB harms lab animals, it has not

been scientifically proven that it poses a hazard to humans.

"The thing that is important to think about is why is EDB used," he said. "If we don't use it, is the failure to use it going to be more of a problem?"

"You always have costs when you switch things out, and if it's used for extending the shelf life of foods, then do we run a significant risk if we don't extend the shelf life of foods? And what do we use in its (EDB's) place?"

The chairman of the state Senate Public Health subcommittee Monday said Texas should follow the lead of Florida health officials in banning grain-based food products tainted with EDB.

But Texas health commissioner Dr. Robert Bernstein said he needs more information about EDB before issuing a removal order or setting standards on how much EDB is safe for human consumption.

# Rancher survey underway to find severity of mysterious cattle disease

**United Press International**  
SAN ANTONIO — Texas ranchers are being surveyed to determine the severity and extent of a mysterious disease that "wastes away" cattle and other ruminant animals, a livestock specialist said Tuesday.

Cases of hard yellow liver disease have been discovered in La Salle and DeWitt counties in south Texas and six counties west of San Angelo, said Dr. Tom Troxel of the Texas A&M Agriculture Extension Service.

The disease, which affects cattle of any age or sex, causes the liver to become hard and take on a yellow color due to an

increase in fat deposits, he said.

"Cattle affected with this disease will appear to waste away while developing a poor hair coat resulting in a general overall poor body condition," Troxel said. "Death may occur because the disease affects the metabolism ability of the affected animal."

Troxel said the cause of the disease is not known and that experts are not sure how it is spread between and among different groups of animals, including cattle, goats, deer, antelope and other ruminants, or cud-chewing animals.

"My speculation is that it's not

very widespread," Troxel said. "We're not sure what threat it poses."

The extension service has sent surveys to ranchers, mainly in the dry, brushy central Texas area, to determine the extent and severity of the disease.

Troxel said there was no cure for hard yellow liver disease, which eventually kills the affected animal.

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