

Defense testimony begins

Jones' friend takes stand

United Press International

GEORGETOWN — A former roommate of murder defendant Gene Jones testified Thursday that the two of them researched the uses and effects of a deadly muscle relaxant before they moved to Kerrville, where Jones is accused of killing a young patient with an injection.

The first day of defense testimony in Jones' trial for the death of 15-month-old Chelsea McClellan focused on licensed vocational nurse Debbie Sultenfuss, who described herself as a very close friend of Jones.

Sultenfuss, testifying under cross-examination, said while the two nurses worked together in San Antonio they investigated the effects of succinylcholine.

She said they learned it would stop a person's breathing and would disappear from the body without a trace within a few hours.

Toxicological tests developed in 1982 in Sweden,

however, found traces of succinylcholine in Chelsea's exhumed body.

Jones is accused of killing Chelsea with an injection of the drug. She also is accused of injuring six other children with similar drug injections and will be tried on those charges later. All those other children survived their initial emergencies, although one baby died seven weeks later.

Sultenfuss' testimony about an incident involving one of the other children at pediatrician Kathleen Holland's Kerrville clinic, where Jones worked for five weeks in 1982, differed from that given by Holland, who was the prosecution's key witness against Jones.

Sultenfuss said 21-month-old Misty Reichenau was having breathing problems and seizures before Jones started an intravenous line. Holland had testified that Jones inserted the IV shortly before Misty's breathing stopped.

Sultenfuss, who happened

to be visiting the office while Misty was being treated, said Holland asked her to prepare an injection of succinylcholine to relax Misty's throat muscles so a breathing tube could be inserted. Holland had testified it was Jones who suggested the drug be used.

Sultenfuss said she never filled the syringe with the drug because Holland and Jones disagreed about the proper dosage.

She also said both Holland and Jones told her a pediatric intensive care unit was being planned for Kerrville's small Sid Peterson Hospital. Administrators at the hospital earlier testified no such unit ever was planned or considered.

Prosecutors, who called 44 witnesses before resting their case Tuesday, contended Jones caused emergencies in several children to show a need for a pediatric ICU at the hospital.

Also in testimony Thursday, an emergency medical

technician who was with Jones and Chelsea in the ambulance where the baby died testified he never saw the nurse give Chelsea an injection.

Chelsea stopped breathing and suffered a seizure moments after Jones injected her with what she said were routine immunizations at the clinic. The baby appeared stable in a Kerrville emergency room, but suffered a fatal respiratory and cardiac arrest on an ambulance en route to a San Antonio hospital.

Previous medical witnesses testified Chelsea probably was given a second injection of succinylcholine on the ambulance, but ambulance attendant Tommy James said Thursday he never saw Jones give the baby an injection.

"An injection takes a certain amount of time and I cannot visualize my being away from the patient for a long enough time for this to take place."

Soviet Union claims U.S. is waging war in Beirut

United Press International

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union charged Thursday the United States was waging an undeclared war against Lebanon and accused U.S. forces of wiping Beirut "off the face of the earth."

The Soviet attack came in a "chronicle of aggression" published by the Communist Party newspaper Pravda that traced the Soviet version of events leading to Wednesday's bombardment of rebel positions by the U.S. 6th Fleet.

The newspaper said President Reagan's "perfidious policy" in Lebanon began in November 1981 when the United States and Israel "pledged to coordinate their operations in the Middle East."

Pravda said that pledge was followed by Israel's June 6, 1982, invasion of Lebanon.

In July, Israel began "barbarous bombings involving the use of splinter, pellet and phosphorous suction bombs supplied to the Israeli aggressor by the United States," Pravda said.

In August, Pravda said, Reagan sent Marines ashore near the Beirut airport. "It was stated that the American troops would stay in Lebanon for no more than 30 days and would not take part in combat operations."

In the summer of 1983, with the Marines still dug in, "American troops fire on Beirut and its suburbs by using ground artillery, shipboard guns of the 6th Fleet and carrier based aircraft," Pravda said.

Now, it said, "The American naval armada off the Lebanese shores has been increased to 30 ships with 30,000 men on board."

Pravda charged "the Americans have practically started an undeclared war against Lebanon."

In an accompanying commentary Pravda said the United States was trying to wipe Lebanon off the face of the earth.

Bubble boy

David shows signs of improvement

United Press International

HOUSTON — David showed signs of overcoming flu-like symptoms Thursday, but even though he has left his lifelong protective "bubble" forever he still faced a hospital wait to see if his immune deficiency was cured enough to begin a normal life.

Doctors restricted David, 12, to a bed in a special sterile hospital room across the hall from the room housing one of the huge plastic bags in which he has lived. He was removed from the germ-free environment Tuesday to better treat dehydration resulting from vomiting, diarrhea and fever.

"He is much improved. His symptoms are not completely gone but they are lessened," said Baylor College of Medicine spokeswoman Claire Bassett.

The cause of the upset stomach has not been determined, she said.

David's symptoms were similar to those sometimes found in transplant recipients, but doctors said they did not know if the ailment was related to David's bone marrow transplant on Oct. 21.

David, whose last name is kept secret to protect his privacy, was injected with 2 ounces of cells from his 15-year-old sister Katherine's bone marrow in a risky experimental attempt to overcome congenital Severe Combined Immune Deficiency. David is the longest living SCID patient.

Doctors hoped his sister's cells would migrate through David's blood to his bones and cause normal production of disease-fighting blood cells, something he had in only minute amounts in October.

"He is much improved. His symptoms are not completely gone but they are lessened."

Doctors will not say if David's body has produced any of the needed cells, but they maintain they are optimistic he will, despite this setback.

A common cold can kill someone with David's defect, so from five seconds after birth he has been kept in plastic compartments in Texas Children's Hospital and in his home. He was transported between them in a special van.

Bassett said David cannot

leave the hospital room until he is cured.

David will not return to any of his "bubbles" because now that he has breathed untreated air the effect of the air-tight isolation chambers is lost, Bassett said.

Although David suffers the life-threatening immunological defect, he never became ill until after the introduction of his sister's cells.

His mother, who kissed him Tuesday for the first time without plastic between them, issued a statement saying "To touch our son for the first time was overwhelming. We are elated and very optimistic."

The parents said they concurred in the decision to move David from the "bubble."

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