

Eight years later

Still comatose, Karen Quinlan is alive as 30th birthday hits

United Press International

TRENTON, N.J. — Eight years after the New Jersey Supreme Court allowed her parents to pull the plug on a respirator doctors said she could not live without, Karen Ann Quinlan remains comatose as she turns 30 on today.

Her adoptive parents, Julia and Joseph, friends and other family members are marking her birthday as they have in past years, with a bedside mass in Ms. Quinlan's nursing home room in Morris Plains.

"I never regretted the decision (to pull the plug)," Mrs. Quinlan said in an interview. "We made the decision as a family after months of prayer and dialogue and were very comfortable with the decision. We know it's morally correct."

Miss Quinlan lapsed into a coma April 15, 1975, after apparently mixing tranquilizers and alcohol at or after a party the night before. At the time, doctors said she would never regain consciousness and would continue breathing only with the aid of a respirator.

But she kept breathing after the respirator was turned off and lives in a shrunken skeletal form, twisted into a

fetal position and weighing between 40 and 60 pounds.

"Essentially her condition is the same. There really isn't any change," said a spokeswoman for the Morris View Nursing Home.

Miss Quinlan is bathed every day and her body rotated to prevent bed sores. A feeding tube drips a high-calorie liquid and antibiotics through her nose and into her stomach.

Her mother said the family intends to keep the feeding tube in place, no matter what the state Supreme Court decides in a pending similar case.

The court earlier this month heard arguments in the case of a man who sought to disconnect his terminally ill aunt's feeding tube. The woman, Claire Conroy, 84, died in February 1983, but the case continued to the high court.

Despite the time elapsed since the April 1976 decision allowing the Quinlans to remove the respirator, interest in Ms. Quinlan has not faded.

"In Morris County she's not forgotten. There's a flurry of notoriety now because of her birthday," said the Rev. Thomas Trapasso, a longtime friend of the Quinlans.

Hill Country hit hard

Grassfires scorch Texas

United Press International

KERRVILLE — Firefighters in the Texas Hill Country Wednesday were spared predicted high winds, and brought under control five grass fires that scorched some 3,000 acres and destroyed seven homes, officials said.

Kerrville Fire Marshal John Mann said firefighters worked through the morning to extinguish two fires and had hopes of tamping out three more by late afternoon.

"We've just about got on top of the ballgame," Mann said. "We're looking real good. We haven't had high winds we were expecting, and that's helped."

The fires broke out Tuesday, whipped up by winds that gusted up to 60 mph. Firefighters worked through the night, taking advantage of lulls in the wind to dig fire breaks and hose down hot spots in the highly-flammable cedar that covers much of the Hill Country.

Mann said aerial surveys Tuesday had initially estimated up to 10,000 acres blackened by the fire. But he said the surveys were obscured by smoke, and the revised estimate was down to 3,000 acres.

In San Antonio, 60 miles east of Kerrville, smoke from the

fires spread over the city.

"It looks like something's on fire here but it's all coming from those fires in Kerr County," said one witness.

Kerrville Fire Chief Raymond Holloway said seven homes had been destroyed.

Mann said there were no structures threatened by the fire as of midday Wednesday.

Mann said there had been minor injuries and cases of smoke inhalation to a few firefighters, drawn from 17 departments, but no injuries to civilians.

"We're using bulldozers to

help establish fire lanes, and we have four-wheel drive vehicles up in the hills to extinguish hot spots close to the perimeters," he said.

"We haven't had much rain lately, and we have a lot of cedar. Cedar burns a lot like gasoline. If it's hot enough and the humidity is low, it'll take a whole cedar tree in a matter of seconds."

Police spokesman Charles Collett said firefighters reduced the number of fires from seven to five.

Testimony in Lucas trial slated to begin Monday

United Press International

Testimony in the capital murder trial of Henry Lee Lucas is slated to start Monday, court officials said, adding attorneys finished selecting 12 jurors and two alternates late Wednesday.

Ten women and four men were selected out of a group of potential jurors that started with 80 people more than two weeks ago. Two women and a man were picked Wednesday to conduct the lengthy jury selection process.

Lucas, 47, received a change of venue from Georgetown to a trial in West Texas for the slaying of an unidentified woman hitchhiker whose body was found along Interstate 35 near Georgetown on Halloween night 1979.

Attorneys individually questioned about 80 potential jurors in 13 days. District Court Clerk Bramhall said attorneys had elected 11 people when they had to dismiss one woman Tuesday.

Another woman was selected shortly after Judge John Carter Georgetown approved the dismissal. Ms. Bramhall said the dismissed juror's husband reported the woman, 44, was not being well.

Her doctor submitted a note

to Judge John Carter outlining her previous health problems.

Lucas has confessed to more than 150 slayings across the country and already has been convicted of two Texas murders, but the Georgetown case is the first capital murder case against him.

If convicted, the drifter and former Michigan mental patient faces a sentence of life in prison or the death penalty. Defense attorneys have said they will argue that Lucas is innocent by reason of insanity.

Carter ruled confessions Lucas gave Williamson County authorities about the Georgetown slaying will be admitted as evidence despite objections from defense attorney Don Higginbotham.

Lucas was sentenced to life in prison for murdering his 15-year-old common-law wife Frieda "Becky" Powell and to 75 years in prison for the slaying of an elderly Ringgold woman.

Ottis Toole, a Florida inmate and former traveling companion of Lucas, will be called as a defense witness during the trial, Higginbotham has said. Toole was transferred last week from Florida to a Georgetown jail awaiting his appearance in San Angelo.

Higginbotham also has said he will call an expert witness to testify about Lucas' mental state, but Higginbotham has refused to name or discuss details about that witness.

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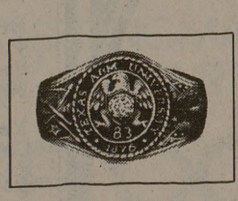
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