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STATE AND LOCAL

Beliefs

Elder's religious convictions questioned in refugee trial

Associated Press
CORPUS CHRISTI — The director of a Catholic Church-sponsored shelter for Central Americans was carrying out his religious beliefs when he gave three Salvadorans a ride to a bus station, Protestant clergymen testified Wednesday.

Jack Elder, who runs the Casa Oscar Romero in San Benito, is charged with transporting three Salvadoran illegal aliens from the shelter to a bus station. His trial is scheduled to start Monday.

The case is before U.S. District Judge Hayden Head Jr. after being moved from Brownsville where the federal judge excused himself from the case.

Defense attorneys, in pretrial motions to have the charges dismissed, have called clergymen from around the country to testify there is ecumenical support for the sanctuary movement.

Elder's lawyers claim he was carrying out his religious beliefs and federal prosecutors singled him out for prosecution because of his public outlashes against U.S. policy in Central America.

Federal prosecutors maintain, however, that the case is a mere illegal alien transportation case and also say that the Central Americans are in the United States for economic, not political reasons, as sanctuary movement workers contend.

The Rev. Donovan Cook, pastor of the University Baptist Church in Seattle, Wash., said Elder "absol-

tely" was carrying out his religious beliefs when he gave the Salvadorans a ride to the bus station in Harlingen, about 10 miles away from the halfway house.

Under questioning by defense attorney Steve Cooper, Cook related Elder's acts along the same lines as the Biblical "Good Samaritan."

Cook said his congregation began supporting the sanctuary movement in 1982 and two other congregations in the Seattle area now are supporting the movement.

Another minister, the Rev. Dr. John Steinbrook of Luther Place Memorial Church in Washington D.C., said his church has helped Ethiopian and Angolan refugees and when the question of helping Central Americans rose, the congregation struggled with it.

"We finally came to a conclusion that it was an opportunity God sent our way to receive these people who are victims," Steinbrook said.

But they and other witnesses testified that although the 41-year-old Elder was the one charged, the Central Americans were the ones who were on trial.

Others, recalling Biblical verses, said that Jesus Christ was himself a refugee when his parents took him from his homeland in order to avoid being slaughtered by King Herod.

Elder and another shelter volunteer face transportation of illegal alien charges in Brownsville.

What's up

Thursday
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS CLUB: will meet at 6:30 p.m. in Q-Hut B for a Chili Night. Tickets are \$3 and available in the copy room of the Ag Bldg.

ALPHA GAMMA SIGMA: will meet at 7 p.m. in 510 Rudder. This is a mandatory meeting for all members.

BAPTIST STUDENT UNION: will meet at 7 p.m. in the BSU (one block behind Loupot's) for a Hee-Haw Howdy Party. Call 856-7722 for more information.

KANM 99.9 FM: will meet at 7 p.m. in 301 for a general meeting. All veteran staff must attend and newcomers are welcome. Call 845-5923 evenings for more information.

MSC CEPHEID VARIABLE: will show "Flash Gordon" in Rudder Theatre at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. The cost is \$1.50.

TAMU BOXING CLUB: will at 5:45 p.m. in 260 G. Rollie White (wrestling room) for an organizational meeting. Call Coach Walton at 693-1052 for more information.

TAMU FOLK DANCERS: will meet at 8 p.m. in the MSC. The room number will be available on the monitor. Beginners and experienced dancers welcome. Instruction provided. Call 845-1227 for more information.

TAMU WRESTLING CLUB: will meet at 6:30 p.m. in 260 G. Rollie White (wrestling room) for an organizational meeting. Practices are held Mon.-Fri. 6:30-8 p.m. Call Coach Walton at 693-1052 for more information.

Friday
CLASS OF '87: will hold a mixer with a crazy costume contest at Shiloh Hall from 9 p.m.-1 p.m. Call 260-7070 for more information.

TAMU MOO DUK KWAN TAE KWON DO CLUB: is holding a membership drive. Interested persons can pick up an application between 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. in 263 G. Rollie White. Call 845-4072 for more information.

UNITED CAMPUS MINISTRY: will meet at 6:15 at the A&M Presbyterian Church offices for Bible study and to plan for this semester. Call 693-2861 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no less than three days prior to desired publication date.

Teachers seek repeal of competency laws

Associated Press
AUSTIN — The Texas Classroom Teachers Association, saying there are better ways to determine who is qualified to teach school, urged repeal of the law requiring teachers to take competency tests.

"Our first choice is that it be repealed," said Jeretta Thompson, president of the 25,000-member group.

If the testing law isn't repealed, then the teacher's association believes it should be amended so exams could be given on an individual basis and as part of a broader evaluation, she said.

Thompson said teachers are concerned because, as stated in the school reform law passed last summer, "It's written as the sole thing to make up a teacher's competency."

Susan Crocker, a high school English teacher from Grand Prairie and chairman of the TCTA's legislation committee, said the morale of many long-time teachers is suffering.

She said teachers who have received undergraduate and advanced college degrees now are finding that the state apparently doesn't consider that proof of their abilities.

"You'll find that low morale

comes from the fact that we feel like the things we've done in the past, that we did in good faith based on the system that Texas education had, are no longer recognized as valid," Crocker said.

"Teachers feel that through course work, they've demonstrated their competency. And they're rather insulted that they have to prove it again."

"But more than that, they don't feel that the problem with incompetent teachers rests primarily in subject matter knowledge. It rests in communication skills with students." The TCTA also said it wants the

Legislature to modify the so-called "career ladder" system which awards teachers salary bonuses based on additional education, experience and good evaluations.

One needed change, the group said is a provision to allow teachers with many years of experience to quickly advance up the ladder rather than making them wait the same amount of time as new teachers who enter the system.

"A person with 20 years experience will be placed on the career ladder in the same manner as a person with three years experience," Crocker said.

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