

STATE AND LOCAL

Authorities study possible bribery for prison escape

Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE — Texas Rangers are investigating reports that two guards took a payoff to assist a prison inmate to escape from the Coffield Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections.

TDC spokesman Charles Brown confirmed Monday that Texas Rangers are assisting in an internal investigation at the Coffield Unit of the escape last Tuesday of Roy Wayne Bevan.

Bevan, 28, serving a 50-year sentence for aggravated rape and two escapes in Cooke County, was a trustee at the Coffield Unit, said Brown. The inmate slipped away last Tuesday from the prison unit near Tennessee Colony and authorities do not know how he escaped.

"We still don't know how he got out," said Brown. He said this is one reason the Texas Rangers, a TDC investigation team and the Anderson County Sheriff's Department

are investigating the possibility of bribery.

The Palestine Herald-Press quoted a source in the Anderson County Sheriff's Department as saying there was a possibility that two guards "cut a deal" with Bevan to let him out the back gate for a sum of \$30,000.

Brown said he could not confirm a specific sum in any bribery, nor, he said, were there specific guards under investigation.

Authorities quoted in the Houston Post said the residences of two guards were searched following the search, but there was no report on what, if anything, was found.

Coffield warden Jack Garner said investigators are checking out information, mostly coming from other inmates, about Bevan's escape.

"We've heard everything from he walked out the front gate, to he was let out the back gate to he climbed over a fence," said Garner. "Anything is possible."

State judge criticized for restraining press

Associated Press

DALLAS — The board of directors of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas Monday criticized State District Judge Olen Underwood of Conroe for what it termed "gross ignorance" of First Amendment prohibitions of prior restraint on the press.

Earlier this month, Underwood issued a temporary restraining order banning a 3-year-old weekly newspaper, the Potpourri News, from publishing any material embarrassing to Montgomery County Commissioner Weldon Locke.

Locke filed a libel suit against the newspaper for publishing a letter to the editor concerning him.

Bronson Havard, president of the FOI Foundation, said Underwood's restraining order was shortlived be-

cause he failed to take further judicial action to make it permanent.

But the temporary action, he said, "underscores Judge Underwood's lack of understanding of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution."

"No judge in the country can constitutionally prohibit a newspaper from publishing," Harvard said. "It is a basic freedom of America."

Havard said the foundation's action did not constitute any comment on the merits of the libel suit.

The FOI Foundation is a non-profit organization that focuses on issues involving the First Amendment, Texas Open Meetings and Open Records statutes, and related media matters.

Membership in Aggie Scouts dropping

By MICHAEL CRAWFORD
Staff Writer

For 75 years, the Boy Scouts of America have been helping little old ladies cross the street. But, while enrollment in the Boy Scout program is increasing nationally, membership in Aggies for Scout ing has dropped.

Now there are only 10 members in the seven-year-old program, says Aggies for Scouting President Ross Mattern. The organization is based on scouting ideals, Mattern says, and combines both service and social functions for its members.

"The social part of it just allows people that have Scouting ideals to get together on a large campus like A&M," Mattern says, "and participate in get-togethers, barbecues and pizza parties. The service part is when we go into the community and help local troops, whether it be Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, in things such as merit badge workshops."

Part of that service involves assisting local Scout leaders plan and carry out Scouting programs such as camp-outs.

"We go in and participate as any other adult would as an adult Scouter," Mattern says. "You might be on the troop committee



Photo by FRANK IRWIN

Aggie Scout, Mark Brown, a senior history major, leads the scouts of Troop 802 through the closing ceremonies of a meeting Monday night.

or you might be an assistant Scout master, like I am, or just participate in other capacities that help the troops."

Yet, Mattern is not sure how much longer the Aggies for Scouting program will survive. Work and school responsibilities

prevent many people from joining, he says.

"The problem we have is that quite a few people are interested," Mattern says, "but it's so low on their priority lists that we're finding it hard to justify the organization at all right now."

Regardless of whether Aggies

for Scouting survives, Mattern says, the national Scouting organization will grow. He believes the Boy Scouts of America provides an education that cannot be received in the classroom.

"It teaches some of the moral ideas that aren't taught anywhere else," Mattern says.

Child care workers may face record checks

Associated Press

AUSTIN (AP) — A Senate committee Monday approved three bills allowing the Texas Department of Human Resources to obtain criminal history records of people seeking employment in child care facilities and state schools.

The bill allowing the department to check prospective child care facility employees possible criminal convictions was sponsored by Sen. Ted Lyon, D-Mesquite. The current law gives the department the right to check the history of child care licensee only.

Federal funds provide \$800,000 for this type of research, the bill says. Brenda Whiteaker of Austin told

the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee her two sons, ages five and nine, were molested by a day care facility employee who had a criminal conviction.

The employee, who was convicted and sentenced to serve 10 years in a state penitentiary for abusing her children, had previously performed sex acts in public, Ms. Whiteaker said.

"Had his criminal record been checked and this law passed four or even two years ago, this would have never happened to my sons," Ms. Whiteaker said.

She said her nine-year-old son has become very withdrawn and is requiring psychiatric treatment be-

cause of the molestation incident.

Carlos Colburn, however, says the new regulations would be costly and have a time factor burden.

Colburn, director and owner of Joyland Child Care in Amarillo, said the cost of having the criminal record checks could cost \$100 to \$150 per prospective employee.

"I have a private day care center. I'm not funded," Colburn testified. He said he is already having to contend with \$4,000 of liability insurance.

Sen. Hugh Parmer, D-Fort Worth, told Colburn, "I don't think you should be in the business unless you spend some money."

Colburn said the time factor in

getting clearance from the department would be a burden because of the high turnover rate. But Parmer said nothing in the bill would delay hiring.

Colburn also said less than one-tenth of 1 percent of child abuse occurs in day care facilities, most abuse occurs in the home, he said.

The new regulation doesn't require prospective employees from listing three references, a requirement Colburn says is most effective in hiring.

Jan Crouch with the Texas Council of Child Care Board said the bill "won't solve all the problems but at least it'll help a little."

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