

Warped

by Scott McCullar



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Murder trial jury selection begins

Potential jurors fill hotel

**Associated Press**  
 SAN ANTONIO — A pool of 200 potential jurors packed a hotel banquet room Tuesday for the start of jury selection in a murder trial for a nursing home and five of its current and former workers.  
 Autumn Hills Convalescent Center Inc. and five employees are on trial in the Nov. 20, 1978, death of Elnora Breed.  
 Breed had lived at an Autumn Hills nursing home in Texas City for 47 days before her death.  
 The case was moved to San Antonio, 245 miles away, because of heavy publicity about the case.  
 Despite the change of venue, lawyers say they expect jury selection to be a lengthy process.  
 Because the jury pool is so large and because there was no available courtroom at the Bexar County Courthouse, jury selection was

moved to the Travelodge Hotel across the street.  
 The county commissioners court designated the banquet room in the hotel as a district courtroom for the trial.  
 State District Judge Don Morgan of Galveston, in briefing the potential jurors, told the group the trial could take two and a half months or longer.  
 The corporation and the five individual employees on trial formally pleaded innocent to the charges in an arraignment Monday.  
 Pleading innocent were Autumn Hills president Robert Gay, 58; Ron Pohlmeier, 41; Mattie Locke, 42, a nursing consultant; Virginia Wilson, 62, former administrator of the nursing home; and Cassandra Can-

las, 31, former director of nursing services at the nursing home.  
 The defendants also are charged in the indictments in the 1978 death of Edna Mae Witt, 78, but prosecutors have elected not to attempt to prove her case.  
 Defense attorneys have steadfastly claimed their clients are innocent and that the charges are absurd.  
 A special grand jury indictment charges the defendants with failing to provide adequate care, nutrition, medications, bathing facilities and other needs for the patients.  
 The indictments also allege they falsified records and failed to adequately evaluate and supervise registered nurses and to take appropriate action when they knew patients were not getting needed care.

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