

State and Local

What's up

Little League crash kills 1, injures 9

PUTNAM (AP) — A Pecos man was killed and nine youths injured, one possibly seriously, Wednesday when their vehicle overturned on the way home from a state Little League baseball tournament in Waco.

The accident occurred about 1:30 p.m. just west of Putnam, 35 miles east of Abilene.

The victim, Chano O. Prieto, 41, was driving through a well-marked construction zone on the westbound lanes of Interstate 20 when the vehicle drifted off the road, Department of Public Safety Trooper Bill Russell said.

Prieto apparently lost control of the vehicle when he tried to jerk it back onto the highway, Russell said.

The most seriously injured passenger appeared to be Chano Prieta Jr., 16, the victim's son, who was reported to be in undetermined condition in Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene.

The other injured boys were 11- and 12-year-olds.

SPCA warns against haste

Pets bought on impulse

By M.K. Pfeifer
Reporter

Impulsive buying is the most common reason people get pets that they can't properly care for, said Angela McCoy, vice president of the Brazos Valley Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Between 8,000 and 10,000 pets are turned in to the Brazos Valley Animal Shelter each year.

McCoy said many people, not just students, buy pets on the basis of "isn't it cute and cuddly."

"That's when someone should step in and say, 'Wait! Get a stuffed animal instead,'" she said.

McCoy worked for the local Humane Society when it was in existence five years ago and said she noticed a great influx of animals at the end of the semester.

She said the summer is a double problem not only because the semes-

ter ends, but because all the animals are going through a breeding cycle.

Charles Huneycutt, College Station animal control officer, said he attributes the increase of abandoned animals at the end of semester to the large number of college students that live in College Station and go home for the summer or graduate.

Huneycutt, who has been a dog-catcher for 10 years in Brazos Valley, said he feels that people do not abandon their animals maliciously, but thinking the animals will easily find a new home.

McCoy agreed. "People have good intentions when they get a pet," she said. "It's just then they discover that having a pet is a big financial responsibility, including shots, boosters and neutering."

Kathy Ricker, executive director of the Brazos Valley Animal Shelter which takes in animals from seven different counties, said the shelter

asks people who want pets to fill out an application.

"All applicants fill out a form that gives us a full background of where they live, the history of their previous pets and the kind of animal they are looking for," she said.

A 24-hour waiting period lets the staff review the application and lets the applicant consider the responsibilities of a pet.

Ricker said she hopes this will prevent impulse buying. The shelter also gives gift certificates so a person can come in and pick out a pet, which prevents the shelter from giving away an animal someone might not want.

Ricker said when the shelter first opened they asked people why they were surrendering their pets.

"We got any reason from they couldn't afford the pet deposit at their new apartment to the cat didn't match the new furniture," she said.

Ex-con doctor hired for state hospital work

AUSTIN (AP) — A psychiatrist imprisoned last year for illegally distributing narcotics is working at the Austin State Hospital.

Dr. Clarence J. Coombs, 56, also pleaded guilty in 1985 to defrauding the Medicaid program by submitting false bills.

Kenny Dudley, the state hospital superintendent who hired Coombs for the \$58,000-a-year job, said he hired Coombs because he previously worked at the mental hospital and "did a good job for us as a psychiatrist," he said.

"I don't know about all the things that took place in his felony trial," Dudley said. "As long as he's got a Texas license and has done a good job for us, I'm not going to worry about the other."

Maryland jurors last summer found Coombs guilty of four felony counts of possession with intent to distribute narcotics and one felony count of being a public nuisance through illicit drug activities in a Washington suburb.

Suzanne Schneider, a spokeswoman for the Montgomery County state attorney's office in Maryland, said Coombs was dispensing large quantities of narcotics to drug addicts even though he did not have a license to operate a drug therapy program.

L. Leonard Ruben, the Maryland judge who sentenced Coombs to five years in prison

said at the time, "He has wreaked havoc upon people he says he was helping."

Coombs said Wednesday he saw nothing improper about working at the hospital.

"I'm a licensed physician," he said. "I'm doing the job here."

Coombs was sent to the Roxbury Correctional Institution, but the sentence was suspended in March when Ruben allowed him to enroll in a residential drug abuse program in Richmond, Va.

Texas parole officers will be notified that Coombs is in the state, according to Harriet Pauley, Ruben's secretary.

Coombs began work July 17 at the state hospital's acute care unit, working with adult psychiatric patients. He had worked at the mental hospital for one year before he returned to Maryland for the trial.

The Maryland Commission on Medical Discipline in November 1983 issued findings that said Coombs presented "an imminent threat to public health and safety" because he prescribed excessive amounts of narcotics.

By doing so, he "created or seriously threatened to create drug dependency in those patients," the commission said.

Coombs declined to comment on whether his job could be in jeopardy because of the Maryland convictions.

Telephone registration to begin in fall

By Bob Grube
Reporter

Beginning in November 1986, Texas A&M students may no longer have to stand in long registration lines at the Pavilion hoping to get the class they need or saying a prayer that the computer won't go down.

Starting with the Spring 1987 pre-registration period in November, students will be able to take advantage of a new system that will enable them to register by touch-tone telephone from anywhere in the world.

Robert Lacey, A&M registrar, said he is pleased with the new system, which he says will greatly reduce the headaches of registering at the Pavilion because the students can register at home.

"We've been testing the system with incoming freshmen during the summer orientation conferences," he said. The system will also be used

during delayed fall registration so upperclassmen can try it, he said.

"We want comments on the system so we can make the procedural instructions as clear as possible," Lacey said. "Clear instructions are the key to the success of the system."

In April 1984, Brigham Young University implemented the first university touch-tone registration system in the country. A&M's system is modeled after BYU's program.

Lacey said a team of A&M administrators went to BYU to study its system and to decide whether or not that type of registration system would work at A&M.

While the two systems are similar, A&M's system will be more complete than BYU's, he said, because it will handle all fees, not just tuition and class schedules.

Doug Bell, director of registration at BYU, says there's no comparison between the old standing-in-line sys-

tem and the new touch-tone system.

"Prior to this, the University dictated to the students where to be and when to be there," he said. "Now, the students can register when and from where they want to."

Bell said the biggest advantage of the system becomes clear when the computer goes down.

"It is not a catastrophe," Bell said. "A student trying to register while the computer is down will not get an answer on the phone; he just calls again later."

While there is a \$50 registration deposit required at BYU, Lacey said there will be no such fee at A&M.

However, Lacey said, any blocks that prevented students from registering under the old system will remain in effect with the new system.

Lacey did not know the cost of implementing the system, but said the only cost being incurred by the University was the one-time equipment

cost, which he said worked out to about 25 cents to 50 cents per student.

He said the human labor costs will be greatly reduced when the new system is put into use because there will be no need for the computer terminal operators who currently help the students register. He said the new system will save the University about \$50,000 per year in computer terminal operator costs.

Lacey added he did not yet know whether or not a priority registration system (seniors first, then juniors, etc.) would be used. He also did not know whether or not the system would be used during the drop-add period.

"Our goal was to offer the students the most complete registration package available," Lacey said. "We wanted to eliminate the central processing point from the registration process."

Police chief selling 'souvenirs' from manhunt

BIG SANDY (AP) — A law officer says he had a good reason for designing a limited edition of posters and T-shirt transfers commemorating last month's search for an escaped murderer suspect.

Big Sandy Police Chief Richard Lingle says the drawings will thank the more than 300 law officers who helped capture Jerry Walter McFadden, commonly known by his self-proclaimed nickname "Animal."

But Upshur County Sheriff Dale Jewkes doesn't agree.

"That's in poor taste," Jewkes said Wednesday. "I don't know what the reason behind it is. I just don't think a law officer should do that. I think it's commercializing."

McFadden escaped from the Upshur County Jail in Gilmer after overpowering two guards and taking a third hostage. About 50 hours later, he was apprehended without resistance in a vacant house in nearby Big Sandy. The hostage escaped unharmed.

Lingle, who was a commercial artist for Woolco department stores before becoming a law officer, said, "It's kind of one of those things just try and see if it works."

"I had gotten some feedback from the community, people who appreciated all the people and the departments who were involved."

Under the headings, "I Survived the Big Sandy Manhunt" and "Texas' Largest — The Big Sandy Manhunt," the drawings show heli-

copters, police cars, tactical officers, canine patrols and mounted officers. It also lists 59 police agencies involved in the search.

McFadden and Deputy Rosalie Williams, who was taken hostage, are not pictured on the posters. Williams declined comment. McFadden was unavailable for comment.

Lingle said the \$3 posters and \$5 transfers are "great gifts and souvenirs" and a "very limited offer."

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