

Medical board seeks 'bigger, better' staff

AUSTIN (AP) — Members of the State Board of Medical Examiners defended themselves Tuesday against claims from lawmakers and others that they are doing a poor job of policing Texas physicians.

"We want to get the bad doctors out of practice just as much as you do," Dr. Carlos Godinez, the board's chairman, told the Senate Nominations Committee.

Seven of Gov. Mark White's nominations to the 15-member board are before the committee pending Senate confirmation.

Five of the nominees took turns Tuesday saying the board needed a bigger and better staff. They also asked for changes in the law to protect hospitals and doctors who blow the whistle on incompetent and criminal doctors.

Senators took turns probing a backup of malpractice cases before the board, some several years old. They also asked why most disciplinary action against doctors is behind closed doors.

Dr. Philip Sanger, a Waco physician who appeared as a public witness, said "Bad doctors are hurting us all. They are ruining the profes-

sion. Policing of physicians is being done very poorly."

Dr. Charles Dryden, appointed to the board a year ago, said, "We've got three lawsuits filed against the board now because we are trying to do something about bad doctors."

Sen. Chet Edwards, D-Duncanville, committee chairman, referred several times to a national TV program recently that said a Texas doctor who made a \$119 million settlement over the 1980 death of a patient was still practicing in Texas.

Several members of the board said they had not heard of the case.

Dr. James Lively, a Corpus Christi osteopath reappointed to the board, said he understood the case Edwards spoke about would be presented the board within two months.

"What kind of staff would have to go for six years before taking action on a \$119 million malpractice case?" Edwards asked.

Godinez said board attorneys do not give them details on a case until it is actually before the board.

Edwards said, "I think this must raise the question of whether there are other cases like this out there that the staff has handled this way."

Sen. Bob McFarland, R-Dallas, said the board proposed to the Legislature two years ago the hiring of hearing examiners who could clear up the backlog of malpractice cases.

"Here it is two years later, and you are even further behind," McFarland said. "We have a crisis in the liability insurance industry and one reason may be that malpractice is high in this state."

He said the board handled 669 complaints in 1985 and 271 disciplinary actions were taken. He said there were 34 cancellations of medical licenses and administrative sanctions handed out in 125 cases.

Godinez said if the full board takes any action it is made public. However, if a doctor voluntarily agrees to a suspension or other administrative sanction, the action is not made public.

Sen. Hector Uribe, D-Brownsville, said, "I think we have heard a confession today that malpractice cases are not being prosecuted properly in Texas. I would like to see more than verbal commitment to tougher tasks."

NBC plans new Alamo siege film

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The walls of the Alamo will ring once again with the sounds of battle as NBC-TV recreates another screen version of the historic siege.

The producer and stars of the television movie, "The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory," visited the mission in downtown San Antonio Monday.

The siege of the Alamo ended in defeat for Texas when an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Mexican troops led by Gen. Lopez de Santa Anna stormed the mission on March 6, 1836. After more than a week and a half of holding off the Mexicans, 187 Texans died fighting.

But the defeat was transformed into victory seven weeks later when Texas troops rallying to the cry of "Remember the Alamo" surprised Santa Anna taking his afternoon siesta and killed, wounded or took prisoner virtually the entire Mexican army.

The cast and crew were in Bracketville on Tuesday — 125 miles west of San Antonio — for the first of 32 days of production. According to Alamo lore, Travis drew a line with his sword and asked all who would die with him to cross the line. All but one man crossed the line.

No broadcast date has been set, but executives say the movie may air during the important February rating period.

'Off-duty' officer was 'on job' when he killed co-worker

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — An off-duty police officer who shot and killed a fellow policeman was working with superiors at the time, authorities said Tuesday.

During a news conference, San Antonio police officials confirmed that Stephen Richard Smith, 31, was shot and killed by officer Farrell Tucker, 35.

Both men had been with the department for seven years. Tucker was questioned by homicide detectives after the shooting and then released pending a department investigation, said police spokesman Paul Buske.

Accused rapist says woman coaxed him to her house

SAN ANGELO (AP) — A man kidnapped from a Mexican jail and returned to face charges of raping and kidnapping a Terlingua woman testified Tuesday he was lured to the woman's home and offered sex, drugs, alcohol and money.

Refugio Gardea Gonzalez, 22, of Jimenez, Mexico, said the woman who accused him of attacking her in late 1985 coaxed him with marijuana and beer. He said she agreed to sexual intercourse during the time she alleges he assaulted her.

"She told me she had what I needed and I had what she needed," Gonzalez said through an interpreter in Tuesday testimony.

The 39-year-old Terlingua woman, however, denies Gonzalez's claim. She told jurors Monday she was forced to walk over desolate de-

sert canyons for several hours before she was robbed at knifepoint and raped repeatedly over an eight-hour period.

She said she escaped by jumping from her pickup truck after tricking the man into believing she could get him more money from her office.

Jim Smith, a Terlingua businessman, told jurors Tuesday that the woman showed up at his house Oct. 27, 1985, screaming hysterically that she had been held prisoner, the San Angelo Standard-Times reported.

At the time of the incident, Brewster County authorities had chased a suspect to the Mexican border who escaped across the Rio Grande. Mexican authorities later captured Gonzalez about four miles inside Mexico but refused to surrender him to Texas authorities.

Seminars give study hints

Teaching 'how to learn'

SHERMAN (AP) — Educators Susan Rolfe and Nancy Benzon tell students to cook breakfast in an iron skillet on mornings before big tests.

It may sound odd, but it's one tip Rolfe and Benzon include in their study skills seminars. They also advise youngsters on methods of note-taking, listening skills and how to study.

Iron stimulates the memory and recall abilities, said Rolfe, a Sherman native. "They may not cook in an iron skillet, but they'll remember they need iron," she said.

For the creative student, the web method of note-taking relieves classroom doldrums. This method maps out the notes instead of ordering them in, say, an outline fashion.

The advice of Rolfe and Benzon is unconventional, but results show

that it works. They describe students with learning disabilities and poor self-images who have found success through the study skills course.

Rolfe, a reading teacher, and Benzon, an English teacher, left their positions with the Richardson Independent School District last year to open Learning Unlimited, a school to teach study skills. They also have written a book, Learning How To Learn, outlining their curriculum.

The course is their answer to House Bill 72. "Texas did not mandate a study skills course, which we think was wrong because they did mandate no-pass, no-play," Benzon said.

"Everyone, at sometime, is not going to do well in a subject," Benzon said, "and to say 'All right, you cannot run track, you cannot play

basketball, you cannot do this because you've had a bad six weeks in one subject...' puts that much more pressure on the kids, which is why they need to know how to study."

Rolfe added, "There are some people who cannot, no matter what, do math, but they can run like the wind. And if they make a 68 in math, they can't get out on that track."

Simple, logical tips such as scheduling study time when you feel the best and using flashcards as aids are new ideas to students.

Benzon and Rolfe also talk to students about test anxiety, student-teacher personality conflicts and laziness.

Self-image is another important aspect for being a successful student, they said.

Gravedigger says he enjoys job

WAXAHACHIE (AP) — Most people retire to a life of leisure or the pursuit of some hobby for which there was never enough time.

Not 72-year-old Carnell Polk.

He digs graves — by hand. Polk flips the last shovel of dirt out of a grave, wipes the early morning sweat from his forehead and chuckles. "I don't even consider retiring, he says. "I've already retired twice in my lifetime, and I'm in no hurry to retire again."

"We live in a different time where it takes a whole lot to live. I've a wife

and home to support. So I guess I'll be digging graves for a whole lot longer."

He took up grave digging about seven years ago, mostly for the exercise and the extra money. He digs about two graves a week. During the heat of the summer, he gets started about 5 a.m. and quits about four hours later. He takes on a helper on rare weeks when he gets more orders.

On a typical morning, Polk will start and finish a typical grave, measuring 8-by-3 and a half feet and 4

and a half feet deep.

He's dug more than 600 graves, most of them around here. He's dug graves as far as 30 miles away in Milford and neighboring Italy and Red Oak.

"I took on this job because I was concerned, that in my retirement, my physical condition would get bad," says Polk, who also owns a vegetable store that he has been running near his home in east Waxahachie for about three years. "I wanted to keep in shape."


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