

Warped



Garage owner wonders who pinched sub

AUSTIN (AP) — Garage owner Ray Ritchie is trying to figure out why anyone would have stolen his yellow submarine. "It was very heavy and very ugly," he says. Ritchie purchased the one-man sub cheap at an Internal Revenue Service auction last month, then displayed it in front of his shop, Brykerwood Garage.

"That sucker weighs over 600 pounds. I would have given the sub to anyone — if they would have allowed me to watch them load it," he said.

His story began in August, when Ritchie went to the IRS auction after hearing that the submarine was available. He was the only person interested in the sub.

"It went down but it would not go up. It was for ex-wives," Ritchie said. Late last week, somebody stole the sub. Since it was so heavy, Ritchie said he's wondering how the thieves made off with it, and why.

"That's why I haven't reported it stolen, because I'm afraid if the police find it, they're going to make me come get it," Ritchie said.

Waldo



by Kevin Thomas

# Some Abilene citizens worry alcohol sales ruin community

ABILENE (AP) — Liquor is here to stay, 10 years after the city went wet following a long election battle and prolonged court fight, and residents said alcohol sales are a part of their economy and lives.

The Texas Supreme Court allowed non-membership sales and beer sales at liquor outlets on Sept. 20, 1978, after legal haranguing over the slim 122-vote wet victory. Some consider that the day Abilene was ruined.

"We had a real great place where people wanted to raise their kids," said Neil Fry, a leader of the dry proponents and now a Taylor County commissioner. "And when it was decided that Abilene could sell alcohol we lost something special."

"We used to be known as the best city in Texas to raise kids. Now we can't say that," he told the *Abilene Reporter-News*. "This is the worst problem in this town, and we openly agreed to allow it."

Officials said liquor has been available in Taylor County since 1962. Even before the 1978 election, residents could buy drinks simply by purchasing memberships from any of 30 private Abilene clubs.

Or they could drive north to Impact or south to Buffalo Gap, where drinks were available without memberships.

The ruling prompted a few celebrations, including reports of people dancing on cars outside convenience stores newly stocked with beer.

Mark Beebe, then owner of the downtown Sound Barrier club, raced to Austin when the court's ruling was known to get his license for liquor sales to non-members. Then he raced back to become the first non-member to purchase a mixed drink.

"Having the first drink didn't feel any different," he said last week. "But there was a feeling of celebration. Abilene was gonna get progressive."

He said many businesses were excited about the idea of selling alcohol because they thought making Abilene wet would improve the economy by getting fine restaurants, hotels and other businesses to come to Abilene.

The city can claim to have earned at least \$1.2 million in mixed drink tax revenues that it didn't have access to before.

Residents also have more restaurants and entertainment options from which to choose. They can buy liquor in 210 locations, 83 of which are clubs or restaurants.

Opponents of more liberal alcohol laws said at the time that Abilene would lose its reputation for cleanliness, and would be struck by increased crime and drunkenness.

Several local ministers now say they have encountered many more families with alcohol-related problems.

Arrests for driving while intoxicated went from 517 in 1977 to 710 in 1987, an increase of almost 200 arrests, law enforcement officials said.

Asked if open liquor sales had made crime a bigger problem, Police Chief Dwain Pyburn said, "I couldn't tell, and as far as I know there's no way to make a real assessment."

# Honeymooners trapped by Gilbert

HOUSTON (AP) — A Seattle couple whose dream honeymoon turned to a fight for survival blames Mexican hotel operators and officials for their problems more than the winds and rains of Hurricane Gilbert.

Brent and Carol Cady were trapped by the hurricane, spending three days without food, water or electricity, and had to spend \$6,800 for a flight to a Houston hospital to treat the injuries that left Mrs. Cady's right leg partially paralyzed and her back possibly sprained.

"I kept wondering if cameras were rolling," Mrs. Cady, 23, said Monday in her room at Houston's Methodist Hospital. "I felt like this should be a television movie."

Doctors said the woman was improving after being treated for a back sprain, internal contusion in the pelvic area and kidney, and leg numbness and problems more severe than usually seen with back injuries.

"I was so scared," she said of the ordeal. "I kept thinking, this is going to end someday."

The couple were returning from a boat tour the evening of Sept. 13 when they were told their hotel, the Beachclub Cancun, had begun to evacuate because of the approaching storm.

They were among about 300 guests who were bused to a power plant that served as a refugee center.

But because the place was crowded and uncomfortable, they left for a rundown hotel about six miles away.

After a night of lizards, insects and lack of food or water, they headed back to the Beachclub Cancun.

At the hotel, the windows of 27 rooms had been shattered and nearby buildings had collapsed. Hotel management said they could retrieve their luggage from their room.

While in the room, Mrs. Cady was pinned to the floor by a 6-by-4-foot wood entertainment center knocked over by a gust of wind. A few hours later, her right leg was numb. That night, they slept on the floor of the hotel lobby.

She was in pain and could move only her arms and hands. Brent Cady had a fever and virus.

The next day she was moved into a back room — on a stretcher.

"They said we would be on the first plane out of here," she said. "I heard the planes flying over me, and I just laid there and cried."

On Friday, the couple found a taxi to take them to the airport. The drive that cost \$2 days earlier cost them \$50 that day, plus another \$50 to let Mrs. Cady keep her stretcher.

At the airport, the couple met a pilot, travel agent and Mexico City consulate official who helped them get on a plane back to the United States.

# \$8.5 million unpaid as health plan fails

AUSTIN (AP) — The attorney general's office and the State Board of Insurance are investigating the recent financial collapse of a statewide health insurance program that left nearly 7,000 teachers and school employees facing about \$8.5 million in medical bills.

Officials said the bills were supposed to have been covered by the insurance plan.

While the two state agencies look at the program, the Texas State Teachers Association said it may file a lawsuit in the case.

"People got taken for their money and have been left hanging out there on the line, swinging in the breeze, so to speak," said Charles Beard, TSTA president.

Any legal action will be aimed at the individuals and entities that the teachers' organization believes are also liable for those unpaid medical bills, said lawyer David Richards, representing the TSTA.

"Conceivably, the school districts themselves are liable to the extent they were promoters of the health trust," Richards said.

The Educators Group Health Trust, a 5-year-old self-insurance

program serving the Texas Association of Community Schools, was declared insolvent by its trustees on Sept. 2. The following week, the health trust filed for liquidation under federal bankruptcy laws, listing assets of \$363,663 and liabilities — essentially the unpaid medical claims — of \$8.48 million.

Unlike instances where state-regulated insurance companies fail, non-regulated self-insurance programs such as Educators Group have no industry-financed assistance to payoff claims.

Ron Dusek, spokesman for Attorney General Jim Mattox, declined to give details of that office's investigation. But he said the direction was generally under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act or under the insurance code.

"The attorney general is very concerned because there are people who have insurance claims that have not been paid," Dusek said.

Although the Texas Board of Insurance doesn't have jurisdiction over Educators Group, the agency said it is looking at complaints against the trust's administrators.

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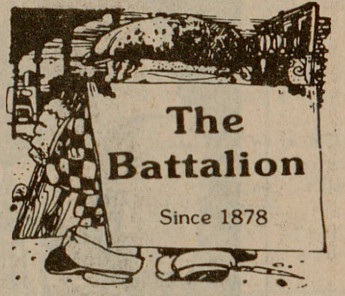
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The 1988 (Fall '87, Spring '88) Aggie-land will be available in October. Look for announcements in The Battalion.

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