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Flood victims' families sue camp

Testimony against directors begins in 1987 camp-flood lawsuit

KERRVILLE (AP) — Visitors to a church-run camp near the Guadalupe River on July 17, 1987, were hurried out of the camp and toward the Guadalupe River, which had swelled from a steady flowing stream into a huge lake, a survivor whose two sisters were among 10 killed testified Wednesday in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against camp operators.

Mike Smith, now 20, was the first witness called by attorneys for three families suing the Pot O' Gold Camp, Huisache Avenue Baptist Church of San Antonio, which operated the camp; the Rev. Claud Bonam, camp administrator; and his daughter-in-law, Zeldia Bonam, the camp's cafeteria manager.

The families' attorneys have argued that camp administrators ignored warnings that the Guadalupe River was rising on the morning of July 17, 1987, when more than 12 inches of rain fell in the Hill Country and allowed the buses to leave safe surroundings.

Defense attorneys said that the flooding was a natural disaster and that the campers were being diverted away from the Guadalupe River when a wall of water hit a bus and a van from Seagoville

Road Baptist Church of Balch Springs stalled, forcing the 43 occupants in both vehicles to flee.

Ten teen-agers died and 33 teen-agers and adults survived after being swept by the raging waters.

In tearful testimony Wednesday, Smith, who was 18 at the time of the accident, said campers were awakened about 6:30 a.m., rushed out and had to eat breakfast on the bus.

His sisters, Tonya, 14, and Stacey, 16, were on the bus, but he said he didn't talk to them because they sat on different rows.

He said while they approached the river, all he could see was water.

"I couldn't see how deep it was," he said. "It was just like a huge lake out there."

He said when the bus stalled he and other teen-age boys were going to try to free by bus by pushing it, but then all the occupants were told to abandon the vehicle.

Smith said the water began rising and that several teen-agers were swept behind a tree and all tried to climb it.

"It felt like I was going to die," Smith said, wiping away tears. "Everybody was panicking. It was

like a movie . . . everybody shoving everybody under the water to get to the tree."

He said he and five others were able to climb the tree until they were rescued by military naval helicopters about four hours later.

Smith's father, Jerry, died last fall after a battle with cancer. His mother, Linda, is seeking \$5 million from the camp for her daughter's death. Also among the plaintiffs are John and Linda Bankston, who are seeking about \$5 million for the death of their son, 17-year-old John Bankston Jr., who saved other teen-agers by being pulled away himself by the flood. His body was never found.

Also, William and Brenda Gossett are seeking \$3 million for the death of their daughter, Leanne, 16.

In opening arguments, attorney David G. who represents the Gossetts and Smiths, said camp operators were told repeatedly in the morning hours of July 17 that the river was rising, but allowed several buses to leave the camp anyway.



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Twister near Waco leaves two injured

TROY (AP) — At least two people were injured Wednesday when a tornado moved through Central Texas near Waco, twisting through small towns and leaving a path of damage along the way.

The National Weather Service in Waco issued a tornado warning about 1:30 p.m., Weather Service spokesman Buddy McIntyre said. A tornado was spotted on radar by the Weather Service about 10 miles southwest of Waco.

The tornado reportedly caused minor damage in Belton and Troy and caused about \$10,000 damage to one home about two miles east of Eddy.

No major injuries were reported. At the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, trees were uprooted and cars were overturned.

In Troy, there was extensive wind damage, roofs were blown in and a tractor trailer was overturned.

Other minor injuries were reported there.

Troy city secretary Ellis Prince

said what he believed to be a tornado seven miles north of Troy caused unspecified damage to a trailer park and apartment complex.

Prince said Bruceville-Eddy requested emergency assistance from surrounding communities, but the alert was canceled after local officials surveyed the town and found no damage beyond the one house.

"It tore that house up pretty bad," Bruceville-Eddy Water Board member Douglas Duty said.

Prince said Bruceville-Eddy requested emergency assistance from surrounding communities, but the alert was canceled after local officials surveyed the town and found no damage beyond the one house.

"It tore that house up pretty bad," said Bruceville-Eddy Water Board member Douglas Duty.

Duty said the area seems to be tornado-prone. "In the last 10 years, I've lost two barns to tornadoes. They just pop down, hit something go back up. Evidently they just like the place."

Paper reports 2 officers questioned in murder

AUSTIN (AP) — An Austin police officer and a former policeman have been questioned about the 1982 slaying of a topless dancer who was an aspiring concert pianist earning money to pay for her studies, *Austin American-Statesman* reported Wednesday.

Quoting unnamed sources, the *American Statesman* said the former officer is viewed by authorities as a suspect in the killing, while the active-duty officer is considered a prospective witness.

Ruth Elizabeth Bettis, 19, was last seen Nov. 24, 1982, when she finished work at the bar.

Her body was found the next day near a low water crossing in a rural area outside Austin. She was nude from the waist down and an autopsy

revealed she had been sexually assaulted, strangled and shot once over the right eye with a small-caliber gun. A toxicology test showed that she had used cocaine the night of her death.

The *American-Statesman* reported the investigation into the murder had stalled until federal Drug Enforcement Administration investigators were told that two members of the Austin Police Department were at the club where the woman worked and may have left with her the night she was killed.

The information compelled investigators to take the unprecedented step of calling a police officer and former police officer in for questioning and to view one of them as a suspect, the newspaper reported.

What's Up

Thursday

- FACULTY FORUM:** Dr. Lanier Burns will present "Can Christianity Be Unique in a Global Society?" at 12:30 p.m. in 226 MSC.
- JUNIAN SOCIETY/DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY:** will show the film "Matter of Heart" at 8 p.m. in 105 Harrington.
- ALPHA KAPPA PSI:** will have a rush mixer at 8 p.m. in the Timber Creek party room.
- DATA PROCESSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION:** Mobil Oil will present information on careers in data processing at 7 p.m. at the University Inn party suite.
- NATIONAL SOCIETY OF BLACK ENGINEERS:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 203 Zachry.
- STUDENTS WITH ALTERNATIVE PHILOSOPHIES:** will discuss mediocrity and materialism at 8:30 p.m. in 404 Rudder.
- PI SIGMA EPSILON:** will have a rush party at 7 p.m. in the press box.
- MSC WILEY LECTURE SERIES:** will have an information session on the spring membership drive at 7 p.m. in 404 Rudder.
- PHI BETA LAMBDA:** will have happy hours from 5-8 p.m. at the Hilton Sundance.
- INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 026 MSC.
- TAMU BICYCLING CLUB:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. in 305 Rudder.
- HISPANIC BUSINESS STUDENT ASSOCIATION:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 125 Blocker.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet. Call the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at 845-0280 for details on today's meeting.
- ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS:** will meet at 6 p.m. Call the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at 845-0280 for details.
- NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. Call the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at 845-0280 for details.
- ALL-U NIGHT:** for spring sports at 7:30 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Friday

- INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION:** will meet with all "countries" that want to be represented during International Week from 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. in Rudder Tower.
- CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST:** will have a Friday Night Alive meeting at 7:30 p.m. in 108 Harrington.
- LATIN AMERICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION:** will meet at 8:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Student Center.
- TAMU COMPUTER USERS GROUP:** will have demonstrations of Ventura 2.0 and Viewpoint from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. in 027 MSC.
- VENEZUELAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION:** will have an informational meeting at 6 p.m. at the Flying Tomato.
- COLOMBIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION:** will meet at 7 p.m. in 305 Rudder.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will meet at noon. Call the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at 845-0280 for details.
- PARENTS WEEKEND COMMITTEE:** Parents of the year applications are available in the Guardroom, Pavilion, Evans Library, and the Student Programs Office and are due Feb. 10.
- BUCK WEIRUS SPIRIT AWARD:** applications are available in the MSC, Student Affairs offices and the vice president of student services office through Feb. 1.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

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