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# Graham's owner helps rebuild fire-gutted Hall

By Sherri Roberts  
STAFF WRITER

Dance clubs and restaurants come, change names, and disappear as frequently as the weather changes in College Station — evidence of the dog-eat-dog competitiveness among local businesses for student dollars.

However, Herman Lawyer, owner of the country/pop dance club Graham Central Station, has decided to take a swim in the opposite direction

from other business sharks by extending a helping hand to his friend and Texas Hall of Fame owner, Paul Emola.

Grahams is donating the proceeds it generates from tonight's business to Emola and his wife Janie to help rebuild the country and western dance hall, which was damaged and shut down by a fire on Feb. 23.

Bobby Fletcher, a manager of Grahams, said Lawyer is returning the favor that Emola did for him in 1984 when Graham's was bombed

and about 90 percent of the club was destroyed.

Emola was one of the first people to come to Lawyer's aid by helping him locate contractors to rebuild Grahams, Fletcher said.

"We're rivals in business, but we'll do anything for each other," Emola said. "We're not out to hurt one another."

Emola said he was "dumbfounded" when Lawyer approached him with the idea to help his club, but

the gesture was typical of Lawyer's nature.

Emola and Lawyer, who met when Emola opened the Hall of Fame in 1978, have a relationship not only as rivals, but also as business partners. The two reconstructed and opened the Austin restaurant "Aleta's Fajitas" in 1985.

Emola said he and Lawyer try to have lunch or dinner together when Lawyer visits College Station from his home in Longview.

Emola said proceeds from the

Graham's benefit will finance a portion of the \$250,000 needed to reconstruct the Hall's interior, much of which was damaged by smoke.

Reconstruction will include the installation of an interior sprinkler system to reduce fire hazards, an expanded bar area, and a new color scheme, Emola said.

Emola said he also is in the process of getting insurance for the dance hall.

Although the Hall probably will not reopen to the public until May

15, it will host the Senior Bash on April 28, Emola said. The bash is one of the festivities of Senior Weekend. A majority of the renovations will be completed by then, he said.

Fletcher said Grahams has experienced only a slight increase in customers since the closing of the Hall because the dance halls attract distinct groups of patrons.

A cover fee of \$3 will be charged to attend the benefit.

## Investigators say officer shot in self-defense

DUNCANVILLE (AP) — Investigators say a Duncanville officer who killed an intoxicated, off-duty Dallas police sergeant during an early morning shootout fired the fatal shot in an attempt to debilitate him.

Also, detectives said Duncanville Sgt. Glenn Repp III fired the first shot in the exchange of gunfire, killing Dallas Sgt. Larry Wise, who got off one round as he was hit. Repp was uninjured.

Initial reports indicated Wise had fired first and that Repp returned the gunfire.

Repp, who is the son of State Rep. Glenn Repp II, R-Duncanville, and a 12-year police veteran, was placed on administrative leave following the confrontation.

Duncanville Police Chief Mike Courville told the *Dallas Times Herald* Repp was simply trying to debilitate Wise.

"I understand that the family was saying our officer should have attempted to wound (Wise) because he was a big enough target," Courville said. "But believe it or not, Sgt. Repp did try to wound him."

Steve Crawford, Duncanville's chief investigator on the case, concurred.

"Officer Repp was attempting to disable Officer Wise, to just hit him in the shoulder," Crawford said.

"He didn't want to shoot, but was forced into the situation," Crawford added.

Wise, 39, and a 19-year veteran of the force, died early Sunday of a gunshot wound to the chest. He was shot in front on his home after returning from a nightclub where he and his ex-wife, Cynthia, had celebrated her 38th birthday.

The couple, who were divorced two years ago but had been living together for the past year, got into an argument and Mrs. Wise went to spend the

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# Principal nixes story of pregnant valedictorian

HOUSTON (AP) — There likely will be no story about the 1989 Jack Yates High School valedictorian in the school paper because the school's top scholar is pregnant — again.

Breaking tradition this year is Yates Principal Chester Smith, who vetoed an article by a student reporter about Carrie Mae Dixon, 17, a straight-A student who carries a full load of honors classes, including physics, calculus and economics.

The story, titled "Against all odds . . . Student becomes valedictorian despite motherhood," details Dixon's first pregnancy, how she was shuffled among relatives after her mother died and her stepfather deserted her and eight siblings, and her dream of a "middle-class home and a middle-class life."

Dixon also takes computer math and word processing — an elective she said she chose so she could learn to type faster than her boyfriend, who also is a senior honor student.

Dixon, who spends two to five hours a

night with her books, has no one to baby-sit her 18-month-old daughter. She says she keeps the child occupied with paper and a pencil, and "she writes while I write."

Dixon has been accepted to the University of Houston and has two scholarships. She plans to major in electrical engineering.

A school reporter first tried to do a story about Dixon last year after she was spotted on a cold, rainy day standing at a bus stop, holding an umbrella over her daughter, Terrisha KeAnli while she was studying a math text. A school official nixed the story idea.

Dixon said she has doubts about whether she will be permitted to give the valedictory address on graduation night June 10 now that Yates administrators know she is five months pregnant.

"(The Yates dean of instruction) said it's HISD (Houston Independent School District) policy that if you are having a baby or expecting a baby, you cannot take part in graduation," Dixon told the *Houston Chronicle*. The final word from the dean was that she would have to check the district's policy, Dixon said.

"I don't think having a baby or expecting a baby should have anything to do with it," Dixon said. "It won't stop me from (being able to) make a speech."

Newspaper editor Shuronda Robinson said Smith rejected the story Thursday when she submitted the newspaper for approval. On Friday, Smith made his final decision to reject the story during a meeting with Dixon, the woman with whom she lives, the journalism teacher, and the editor, Robinson said.

Smith would not comment on why he will not allow the story to be printed. He referred all questions to HISD spokesman Ria Griffin.

"He indicated that he had no problems about the story as regards the valedictorian," Griffin said. "But there were some things that were inappropriate with her personal life. There were some things that were not appropriate for a high school newspaper."

Griffin said the final decision hinged on Dixon's guardian's refusal to sign a waiver to print the story.

But Dixon, who will be 18 on April 29, said the woman with whom she lived from age 5 until several months ago is not legally her guardian. Dixon also said the woman agreed to sign the release if references to her were deleted.

"Mr. Smith told us that even if she signed it, he would still not allow it to be printed," Dixon said. "He just kept saying something about the community wouldn't accept it."

Robinson said the newspaper staff also agreed to edit the story to satisfy Smith, but the offer was rejected.

Griffin said Dixon's status as valedictorian will not be affected by her pregnancy.

Robinson said she decided to fight Smith's decision in spite of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision giving school administrators the right to censor student publications.

# Group turns hobby into \$60 million project

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — Fish don't swim lazily in aquariums in the Raymond Dow home anymore.

These days there's not even a fish tank in the Brawner Parkway home that the 75-year-old Dow shares with his wife, Betty.

It wasn't always that way.

During the 1950s, the couple, who helped spearhead the formation of the first aquarium organization in the city, boasted an aquarium in almost every room of their house.

"At one time," recalled Dow, one of the first presidents of the Corpus Christi Aquarium Society, "we had an entire room with nothing but fish in it. . . . Later, after we couldn't get anywhere with getting a public aquarium, we kinda burned out on fish. We got rid of 'em in 1962, when our interests changed."

But the Dows' dream for a public aquarium, which the first aquarium society pursued for nearly a decade, lived on.

Other supporters in subsequent aquarium organizations carried the banner over the next three decades before finally hammering out compromises to obtain the aquarium the Dows dreamed of on Corpus Christi Beach.

Today, the organization that is directing and building the aquarium is known as the Texas State Aquarium Association.

In July 1990, the first structure — the Gulf of Mexico exhibit building — will open in the long-awaited \$60 million Texas State Aquarium.

The multimillion-dollar aquarium is a far cry from the modest \$4 million to \$5 million project first conceived in 1978 for the Peoples Street T-Head.

However, the genesis of what could become a world-class tourist attraction began in early 1952, when the Dows visited the now-closed Young-Wise Feed Store to buy tropical fish.

"Betty and I actually started the whole thing, but it was a notice that Lorena Jessup put up at the store that got us going," Dow said. The notice called for a meeting of aquarium lovers.

"Other people soon joined us, and we put a notice in the paper, and some 75 to 80 people attended that first meeting," he said.

"We incorporated and even published a paper called the Fish every month," Dow said. "We went to aquarium shows all over the state

and had a state convention here."

Dow recalled efforts by the society to secure municipal funding for the aquarium. "We couldn't even get a penny out of the city," he said, "but nowadays the city gives them (aquarium association) millions of dollars."

The society at one time even asked the Nueces County Park Board to buy a building on Padre Island for \$4,300 to house about 20

fish-filled tanks. Other ideas surfaced in succeeding years, but nearly a decade passed before the next serious aquarium attempt was launched and money was raised for a feasibility study.

Jack Solka, an architect and active aquarium volunteer, recalled that he first became involved in 1968 as a member of the Jaycees organization. "About 10 years ago, the current

aquarium association was established, and now the dream is coming true," Solka said.

Today, the aquarium project, which first had a price tag of \$5,000 when it was to be located on the Peoples Street T-Head, has blossomed into a four-phase, multimillion-dollar, high-tech project spread over

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# Former Midland reverend seeks top post of SBC

DALLAS (AP) — The Rev. Daniel Vestal of Dunwoody, Ga., has announced he will seek the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention when the denomination meets in Las Vegas in June.

Vestal, 44, said his decision was based on the convention having "forsaken its basic principles" in recent years. Vestal, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland, will be supported by Baptists Committed, a new group of centrist, or moderate, Baptists.

"He has profound integrity and will bring the convention together," the Rev. Winfred Moore of Amarillo, president of Baptists Committed, said of Vestal.

Vestal said for 10 years he has worked quietly in key committees of the denomination trying to bridge

fundamentalists and moderates. He said he has "tried to stand in the middle."

Vestal announced his candidacy to his church members Sunday, then returned to Corsicana, where he had been preaching at a revival earlier Sunday.

Vestal was pastor of First Baptist Church of Midland for 12 years before becoming pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dunwoody, a suburb of Atlanta.

He will run against the incumbent Rev. Jerry Vines of Florida, who has said he will seek re-election as president of the 14.8 million-member denomination.

Vines is endorsed by fundamentalists and Vestal is expected to garner early support from denominational moderates.

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