

Wednesday, June 28, 1989

## Allison traps girl, 7, in sewer for 15 hours

HOUSTON (AP) — A 7-year-old girl swept into a storm drain by fast-flowing water from Tropical Storm Allison spent 15 hours trapped inside an underground sewage channel before she was rescued Tuesday, authorities said.

"She spent the entire night in the city's major sewer system with all that flood water coming in on her, and hardly had a scratch," Houston Fire Department spokesman Mike Warnke said.

"It's just a miracle that she could still be alive," he said.

Laticia Reese was playing outside her south Houston home around 5 p.m. Monday when her young cousin saw her lose her footing in the fast-moving storm water and slip into a nearby gutter, officials said.

She was retrieved around 8 a.m. Tuesday by two construction workers who removed a manhole covers near the spot where she disappeared, Warnke said.

"We used a flashlight and saw a little figure about 30 feet under the street," said Timothy Gabrysch, a construction worker who went into the drain Tuesday morning. "It was pitch dark and she couldn't see any-

thing. When she saw us, she ran to us.

"It's an experience I guess you can't explain. I have no idea how she stayed there. It's pretty nasty; there's all kinds of debris."

Warnke said, "They began yelling her name, and she answered back: 'Who are you?' They told her and she was reluctant to come out of the hole after being in there all night hanging on through that swift water."

Laticia, who suffered only abrasions to her knees and elbows and mild shock, was in very good condition after being admitted for observation at Humana Hospital-Southmore, spokesman Ramona Branch said.

"I think she was just a little bit shaken, a little bit hungry and a little bit cold," Branch said Tuesday, adding that the girl still was overwhelmed by her ordeal.

"When they keep asking her what happened, she gets a little foggy about that and you don't get really clear answers," Branch said.

"She also thought she didn't spend the night there," he said. "She thought she went home."

Houston got more than 10 inches of rainfall as Allison moved slowly northward Monday, flooding streets, stalling cars and forcing hundreds to evacuate as Laticia somehow clung onto some cracks in the brick lining of the sewer, authorities said.

Warnke said the water was pouring so quickly into the drain where

she disappeared that fire department personnel were unable to reach her, or even conduct a proper search Monday.

"The water was going in there so swiftly that they couldn't get down to her," he said.

"The fire department diving team was called out and they refused to go in the hole because the water was

just so swift that it was too dangerous," Warnke said. "They thought that at that point, because the water was moving so fast, that she would have been swept down to the place where the sewer system empties into the bayou."

Police officers were stationed near the site to watch for signs of the girl.

## Tanker pilot testifies ship failed to respond before hitting barge

HOUSTON (AP) — The pilot of a tanker that collided with a barge in the Houston Ship Channel testified Tuesday his vessel failed to complete a turn shortly before the accident, which resulted in a 250,000-gallon oil spill.

During a hearing before a Coast Guard official, pilot Michael Gale said he was trying to make a right turn into the channel when the tanker and barge collided around 6:20 p.m. Friday.

Gale said he had performed all the needed maneuvers for the turn, but the vessel didn't perform as expected. He said the probable cause for the difficulty he had in steering the tanker was sediment buildup in the channel.

The captain of the tugboat pushing the barge testified later Tuesday that the collision occurred about three to five minutes after Gale radioed to him he was having trouble.

"The ship's pilot called and said he couldn't stop," Mason T. Ware testified. "I replied, 'Well, it's too late for me to stop at this time.'"

The ruptured barge, one of three being pushed by a tug boat, spilled an estimated 6,000 barrels of crude oil, fouling a mile-long stretch of the Galveston Bay shoreline. Crews continued to clean up the spill near La Porte Tuesday.

During the hearing that began Tuesday before Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. R.H. Arredondo, Gale said that "shoaling," or a sediment buildup, seemed the most likely cause of the vessel's inability to make the turn from the Bayport Channel

into the Houston Ship Channel.

"My only opinion is, she didn't have enough water underneath her keel," Gale said when asked about the vessel's failure to make the turn.

The hearing is being conducted to determine what caused the accident, not to assess blame, Arredondo said. Nine people were scheduled to testify during the hearing, which was expected to end Wednesday.

Arredondo said his report of the hearing probably would not be ready for three months. He said he

anchor in an effort to complete the turn and avoid a collision.

Instead, he said, the Rachel-B surprisingly continued straight ahead and the collision soon occurred.

"It should have made the turn," Gale said, adding that he'd had no earlier difficulty in maneuvering the ship.

"She just didn't respond to the commands we were giving her," he said.

Gale and the Korean captain of the ship, Han Sun Kim, said the ves-

"The ship's pilot called and said he couldn't stop. I replied, 'Well, it's too late for me to stop at this time.'"

— Mason T. Ware, tugboat captain

could recommend physical changes to the area where the accident occurred, new procedures or even suggest a civil penalty hearing be held in which a fine could be levied against anyone found at fault.

Gale, a pilot for 12 years who said he has made 2,700 trips in the channel, testified that the Panamanian registered tanker, "Rachel-B" was destined for the open sea when it collided with the inbound barge.

When he attempted to turn the ship into the channel, he said he realized the vessel wasn't turning sharp enough. He gave the orders to reverse the engines and drop an

sel was either hardly moving or stopped when the accident happened. But Ware, who has had a license to operate a tugboat since 1977, testified that both vessels were moving.

Ware also testified that soon after Gale radioed him he first reversed his tug's engines, but then realized there wasn't enough time to stop.

"There was not time in this situation for me to stop," he said, responding to an attorney's suggestion that he should have halted the tugboat. "So I shifted to full speed ahead to get control."

## Police group calls for inquiry of Clements aides

AUSTIN (AP) — The state's largest police organization on Tuesday called for an investigation of two gubernatorial aides, who reportedly influenced the veto of a bill after accepting free trips from a group opposed to it.

And state lawmakers who sponsored the bill said they would file it again for consideration during the 30-day, special legislative session.

The measure, which was passed during the regular session ending May 29, required law enforcement groups to disclose how much they raise through telephone solicitations.

Ronald DeLord, president of Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, said the bill would have helped identify suspicious organizations asking for money.

He said some organizations use a huge portion of the solicited donations for purposes other than charities. Others lie about representing police organizations and keep all the money, he said.

DeLord said a grand jury should investigate the governor's chief of staff, Mike Toomey, and legislative liaison, Cliff Johnson, whom he says told Gov. Bill Clements to veto the bill.

According to published reports, Toomey and Johnson said they went on a ski trip to Utah in December as guests of the Texas State Troopers Association and two other groups.

The troopers association, which is not connected to the Texas Department of Public Safety, uses telephone solicitation to collect donations, DeLord said.

The group opposed the bill, sponsored by Sen. Chet Edwards, D-Duncanville, and Rep. Keith Oakley, D-Terrell.

Clements said neither Toomey nor Johnson influenced him to veto the bill, which he previously said lacked "substantive changes" to the current law.

## University Press founder dies Monday in Austin

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

The man who established the Texas A&M University Press died Monday in Austin.

Frank H. Wardlaw, 75, also established scholarly publishing houses at the University of Texas and the University of South Carolina.

He served A&M from 1974 to 1978. During his 33-year publishing career, he oversaw the publication of more than 700 books, about 50 of which were University works.

Wardlaw came to A&M after serving as founding director of the University of Texas Press for 24 years. Before founding the

UT press, Wardlaw founded the University of South Carolina Press in 1945.

A book series endowed by friends of the Wardlaws and published by A&M bears his name and a Texas art collection honoring Wardlaw went on display in the A&M press offices in 1983. He was bestowed director emeritus status in 1981 by the Board of Regents of the Texas A&M University System.

Services are pending for Wardlaw, born Aug. 16, 1913, in Indiantown, S.C. He is survived by his widow and daughter, both of Austin, and a son who serves as American consul general in Shanghai, China.

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at Wadley

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**Place: Rudder Fountain & Sbis**

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