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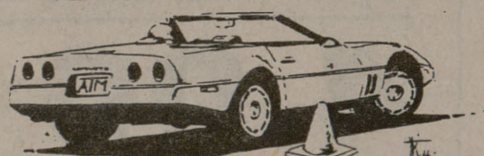
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Holiday deaths hit 3-year high

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seven accidents on Texas roads that killed two people each during the Labor Day weekend contributed to the highest death toll for the holiday in three years, a Department of Public Safety spokesman said Tuesday. The 46 deaths shattered the agency's prediction of 34 fatalities during the 78-hour weekend counting period, DPS spokesman Mike Cox said. "We're certainly disappointed that the count went that high," Cox said. The highest number of deaths in recent years during Labor Day was in 1982, when 57 were killed. Last year, 32 people were killed. In 1987, the tally was 28 and it was 51 in 1986. Cox noted that no fatal traffic accidents were reported in Dallas, Corpus Christi, the Panhandle and most of West Texas during the weekend.

He said, however, that 10 of the accidents involved pedestrians and 13 were what authorities term alcohol-related. Eleven fatalities were reported in the final few hours of the counting period. Maria Carmen Castillo of Houston was killed Monday evening while riding in a pickup involved in a three-vehicle collision in Harris County. Officials say a traffic light malfunction caused the accident that injured six others. A Fort Worth pedestrian, Jose Jimenez, 46, died of injuries suffered when he was struck by a vehicle. The driver fled the scene and has not been arrested, investigators say. David G. Kimball, 26, of Houston was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle and struck a stop sign. Houston officials say he was traveling at a high rate of speed and wasn't wearing a helmet. A mandatory helmet law went into effect in Texas on Friday.

mario vaero, 60, of Alpine was another pedestrian killed Monday evening when a pickup truck hit him while he was walking down a pine street. Patricia Adam Nava, 24, of Rockport killed Monday evening in one-vehicle accident about four miles west of Rockport. Authorities said she lost control of the vehicle, crashed through a fence and was pinned in the car for 40 minutes. Gordon Randall Dover of Texas City killed Sunday evening when the vehicle he was riding in went out of control and skidded off road and into a ditch in Harris County. Eddie Leroy Tillis and Cassandra Faye Layton, both of Houston, died Monday evening in a motorcycle accident. Harris County authorities said three of four stop signs had been taken from an intersection, causing the driver to lay the motorcycle down in his attempt to stop.

Marine experts stay hopeful for survival of beached whale

GALVESTON (AP) — Marine mammal experts at Sea-Arama Marineworld remained hopeful Tuesday an infant 900-pound sperm whale that washed up on a beach over the weekend would adapt to an artificial whale nurser and a formula. "He's not getting any worse, but not getting any better," said Cheryl Snyder, senior trainer at the park. "He's holding his own." The whale, estimated to be no more than two weeks old, was found ashore on the Bolivar Peninsula Saturday. When volunteers from the Texas Mammal Stranding Network couldn't find his mother, the 12-foot whale was hoisted onto a flatbed truck, smeared with zinc oxide sunscreen and wet down for the trip to the marine park.

Until he adapts to the artificial nurser, Odie was being fed fluids every four hours through a stomach tube. Experts were making a simulated formula from a powder milk that contains no lactose, which marine mammals are not capable of digesting. "He's able to float and hold himself in the water," Snyder said. "His equilibrium is off. Volunteers are in the water with him 24 hours a day. They gently hold on to him to keep his blow hole above water." The discovery of a whale on the Texas coast is quite rare. Since 1984, only two whales have been found. A 500-pound, 9-foot-long male sperm whale was found dead in Corpus Christi two years ago. In 1984 a pygmy sperm whale died at Sea-Arama 11 days after it beached. It died of peritonitis caused by eating a garbage bag, a bread wrapper, a corn chip bag and parts of two other plastic bags.

Snyder said park personnel, after consulting experts from other marine parks around the country, were constructing an artificial nurser and had come up with a whale infant formula they were hoping the whale, named Odie, would eat. "We got diagrams from marine parks who had raised baby killer whales," she said. "We're getting a very strong suckling response. He's sucking hands or anything that comes in his mouth. "I'm real excited. This is an amazing animal. It's an animal that researchers and scientists — that no one gets much contact with. It's extremely exciting to have one this close. Mostly, we're all cautious because although we're enthusiastic, you're realistic. (Survival) statistics for a stranded animal are very low." Odie was young enough to nurse and has not yet cut his teeth. A sperm whale will nurse for six months after birth.

Sea-Arama officials said they hoped to be able to release Odie once he begins feeding himself whole foods, normally squid. That was not expected, however, for several months, although by then he likely would double his size.

Sara Lee 'light' desserts lose misleading name

AUSTIN (AP) — Everybody doesn't like something, but nobody likes being told a "light" cheesecake has fewer calories when it doesn't, said Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox when announcing a settlement Tuesday with the Sara Lee Corp. Mattox said he and attorneys general from eight other states obtained a settlement in which the Chicago-based Sara Lee will stop advertising its diet cheesecake and pound cake snack as "light." Mattox said that Sara Lee's Light Classics cheesecakes and its All Butter Pound Cake Snack have more calories and fat than the original Creme Cheesecake and the Original All Butter Pound Cake, respectively. The advertisements for the "light" cheesecake and pound cake were misleading, Mattox said. "Those of us who are weight-watchers and connoisseurs of desserts need as much help as we can get," Mattox said. "Mislabeling a dessert is unfair to consumers." But officials with Sara Lee said the "light" designation referred to the texture of the dessert, not the calorie content. "The word light appeared in small print and referred to the dessert's texture," T. Patrick Costello, president of Sara Lee Bakeries retail division, said. "We believe this objection has no merit in fact, but we have decided to settle because it will save us additional costly legal expenses." In any event, Sara Lee dropped the "light" designation before the attorneys general complained about it, according to William Hammer, a spokesman for the company. He said the "light" reference proved to be an ineffective marketing tool. Hammer said there also was dispute over whether the "light" products actually had fewer calories. For example, he said a Sara Lee Light Classic cheesecake had 200 calories as compared with 230 calories for the traditional product. But the attorneys general maintained that was because the "light" slice weighed less than the traditional product, although was similar in volume. Under the settlement, Sara Lee has agreed to display the preserving calorie content of its products, and that any product labeled "light" will contain more than two-thirds of the calories of the product to which it is being compared. The company also will pay each state \$10,000 in investigation costs. The other states involved in the settlement are California, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York and Wisconsin.

Cigarettes may be cause of forest fire

HENLY (AP) — Youths playing with cigarettes are believed to have started a raging fire that charred more than 700 acres of ranch land near the Pedernales Falls State Park, authorities said. The stubborn fire was brought under control late Monday after a 28-hour battle, officials said Tuesday. An army of at least 80 firefighters from across Central Texas and beyond had to overcome flames, rugged terrain, 101-degree temperatures and gusty winds in battling the blaze. "There is not enough people, not enough water and too much wind," Tommy Holder, a volunteer with the Blanco Volunteer Fire Department, said at the height of the fire.

MANVEL (AP) — Garbage dumped as far back as 1962 in a landfill near this north Brazoria County town included radioactive materials that now threaten homes, water and health, residents say. "We've had problems ever since we moved out here in 1976," said Marvin Pomfrey, 52, who lives across from the abandoned dump he claims caused the death of several of his dogs. "We didn't know there was a landfill that was radioactive," Pomfrey said. "When we moved out here, there wasn't a word said about contamination." For 10 years, companies and individuals dumped trash ranging from household garbage to radioactive waste at the six-acre tract, which served as an open dump for the city of Pearland. The city asked only for a small user's fee, but filed no records of the debris. The landfill was closed in 1987 because it was filling up and would be too costly to operate, City Manager Ron Wicker said. "We used to go berry-picking along the road," said Walter Ferguson, 45, who used to live across the street from the dump. "There are berry vines all along the fence. We didn't know anything about radiation or that this was a dump." The Fergusons moved to Houston after a radioactivity sign was posted at the dump in 1986. Since then, their son was born with Down's Syndrome and they have filed a \$6.8 million lawsuit claiming endangerment to him. Joe Rost, 49, moved his college-age daughter to Houston, but told the Houston Chronicle he cannot afford to move the rest of the family. "When you put your family on the front lines, you can't take any chance," Rost said. "We're stuck in a corner. I can't sell, and I can't support two homes; otherwise I would have been out of here a long time ago." An Environmental Protection Agency study done in 1986 concluded there was insufficient evidence to evaluate the extent of contamination. Higher-than-normal surface readings of radioactive materials were recorded, but nothing else considered dangerous. No soil surface readings were done. Soil samples taken from the dump revealed extensive PCB contamination. A total of 29 compounds were identified and detected in concentrations, as well as high concentrations of lead and barium. Barium, a toxic metallic element and manganese, also toxic and tough to toughen steel, were located in three residential water wells higher than normal levels.

Residents fear radioactive dump threatens homes, family health

HOUSTON (AP) — Joe is a bright, successful, prototypical yuppie. At least, he appears to be. But his wallet is padded with credit cards charged beyond the limit. He owes the Internal Revenue Service several thousand dollars. He owes his boss. He owes his friends and relatives. He amazes himself with how he keeps coming up with more money, money that is begged, borrowed and stolen. He won't leave his house unless he has at least \$2,000 cash in his pocket. The money goes fast. He enjoys the everything-is-wonderful rush of cocaine. But even more than that, he loves the thrill of a heavy wager, the danger of a defeat that will leave him penniless again and challenge his ingenious mind to devise new ways to raise money. He plays the riskiest sector of the stock market, the index. He also gambles on sports. He subscribes to a television cable service so he can watch several games a day. He goes to bed with his radio on as he tries to pick up the last scores from the West Coast. He wins some but loses more. Finally, he no longer can replace what he loses. He can't make the minimal credit-card payments. And no matter how much he lies on his financial statements, he can't coax more loans. His wife has left, and now the bookies are leaning on him, making not-so-veiled threats that harm will befall him if he doesn't pay his debts. Now, Joe is desperate. He sees his life as hopeless and worthless. He ponders suicide. He has struck bottom. Joe is not an actual person but a composite of typical compulsive gamblers as described by members of Gamblers Anonymous and counselors at the New Spirit Clinic in Houston.

Problems from money to marriage plague millions of gambling addicts

Compulsive gambling is one little-known aspect of the Age of Addiction, which is the logical extension of the Me Generation of the 1970s. In this era of self-indulgence, the quest for thrills and euphoria too often becomes a compulsion. Alcohol, cocaine, sex or food can overwhelm a person's life. And can gambling. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates 4.5 million Americans are compulsive gamblers. According to Gamblers Anonymous, the figure exceeds 8 million. One of these compulsive gamblers, addiction expert, could be Pete Rose, manager of the Cincinnati Reds. "He looks like a good case of it," says Dr. Thomas Clocher, a Houston psychiatrist and licensed addictionologist who heads New Spirit. Arnold Wexler, director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling in New Jersey, says, "From what I read, and if it's true, it sure sounds like Rose is a compulsive gambler who needs help." Rose was barred from the game Aug. 24, but can apply for reinstatement next year. Some of those who are knowledgeable about addiction decried lifetime banishment as unfairly harsh. The fault the baseball rule book, written decades ago, was out benefit of modern research in addictionology, forcing a compulsive gambler to lie and make denials to maintain his employment. While baseball and other sports give cocaine addicts second and third chances to rehabilitate themselves, Rose would be out after his first strike. Wexler argues that major-league baseball should allow compulsive gamblers to "admit their addiction and begin treatment without fear of having their livelihood taken away from them." He contends that Rose is by no means an isolated case.