Bush's ideas for drug crime death penalty criticized by 13-year-old DARE member

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush, who advocates the death penalty for some drug crimes, received a surprise lecture during an anti-drug program Wednesday from a 13-year-old who called the punishment murder.

"To me, killing someone that has committed a very serious crime is wrong," Chantee Charles, a seventh grader from nearby Arlington, Va., told a Rose Garden ceremony. "It does not solve anything. All it does is take someone else's life."

Taking it all in stride, Bush complimented Chantee and two other students invited to speak for doing a good job expressing "what's on your heart" without worrying "if people agree with you or not."

Bush, who has advocated the death penalty for drug kingpins and for those who kill law enforcement officers, was presiding over a ceremony honoring the Los Angeles-based DARE (Drug Abuse Resistence Education).

At the ceremony, part of Bush's continuing efforts to promote his new anti-drug strategy, three Washington area students who are members of the DARE program were invited to read essays.

While the other two stuck to drug themes, Chantee used most of her allotted time to attack the death penalty.

Saying "probably thousands" of innocent prisoners have been executed, she argued that death penalty proponents "miss the point that the prisoner has a family too."

"The guard that turns on the switch to electrocute the prisoner is just as much a murderer as the person who has committed the crime," she said.

"The guy who kills the prisoner must feel guilty afterwards. But I guess they get paid for it," she said. "If I had one wish, I'd wish that the death penalty never existed."

"DARE has taught me to make my own decisions and not let friends make them for me," she added.

Chantee, a student at Arlington's Thomas Jefferson Intermediate School, later told reporters she was unaware of Bush's strong support for the death penalty for certain crimes.

She indicated she had not intended to be provocative, but "I don't like the idea of people getting killed. It was just a topic I wanted to write about."

Maria Sheehan, a White House aide who helped coordinate the program, said that the three students were picked to speak by local leaders of the DARE program.

The two other students read somewhat less controversial essays.

Janine Waters, 12, also of Thomas Jefferson Intermediate, said, "If people offer you drugs, just turn away and say no. Or change the subject."

And Borris Torrico, 13, of Williamsburg Intermediate School, also in Arlington, said, "When you're older and you want to get a new car, like a Porsche, you can save up for it and not use it on drugs or on alcohol."

Bush told the student speakers, "It's not easy to get up in front of a big, scary audience like this and do such a good job — say what's on your heart, not worry if people agree with you or not."

Worst mine disaster in five years kills 10, leaves three injured

WHEATCROFT, Ky. (AP) — Methane gas ignited in a flash "like a flame thrower" in a coal mine Wednesday, killing 10 miners and burning three, authorities said.

It was the nation's worst coal mine disaster since 27 miners were killed in 1984 in a mine in Utah, said Frank O'Gorman of the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration.

There was nothing to indicate that anyone was trapped underground at the Pyro Mining Co.'s William Station Mine in western Kentucky, said Nancy Toombs, a secretary for state Commissioner of Mines and Minerals Willard Stanley.

The ignition point of the fire about 9:30 a.m. CDT apparently was near part of a mining machine that was being dismantled to be moved, O'Gorman said.

Thirteen miners were in the vicinity when the explosion occurred, state Police Capt. Robert Forsythe said.

Three miners escaped with burns.

Rescue teams were sent into the shaft to remove the bodies, state trooper Ed Brady said.

Police sealed off the area around the mine and families of the dead miners were directed to a company headquarters building just outside Wheatcroft, a town of about 300 people.

The exact cause of the fire was not immediately known. But MSHA spokesman Sam Stafford said such fires are usually caused when a piece of metal equipment hits stone and causes a spark.

Stafford said such fires are small but "like a flame thrower."

O'Gorman said the dead were believed to have died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Methane, the major ingredient of natural gas, is found naturally in coal seams. Mine ventilation systems normally keep it below explosive concentrations.

The mine, which the state mining agency says employs 380 miners on three shifts, is about 140 miles southwest of Louisville and 40 miles southwest of Evansville, Ind.

Mayor Larry Cowan, who worked 23 years in mines, said most people of the town earn their livings in the coal industry.

"We know, invariably, it could happen, but it's always supposed to be someone else," Cowan said.

The injured were taken to Union County Hospital in Morganfield for treatment of burns, Brady said. Their condition was not immediately known.

Senate allots $221 million for state military projects

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate appropriations committee voted Wednesday to spend $221 million on military construction projects in Texas next year, setting aside money for Red River Army Depot, Brooke Army Medical Center and Naval Station Ingleside.

Under the spending plan for fiscal 1990, $39 million would go to the renovation of the Army Depot in Texarkana, $22 million would be used to complete construction of the homeport near Corpus Christi, and $53 million would finance the replacement Army medical center in San Antonio.

Although the Senate appropriations subcommittee total is what President Bush had sought, it is $40 million less than the $261 million approved by the House for Texas military construction projects.

An aide to Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, said the additional money in the House version is targeted for barracks projects at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood and for four National Guard installations.

World briefs

East Germans continue migration to West

PASSAU, West Germany (AP) — Thousands of East Germans crowded refugee camps Tuesday to begin building new lives in the West after crossing the border from Hungary. Officials said the emigre flood could exceed 15,000.

Communist East Germany issued a strong, formal protest to Hungary's reform-minded government for permitting the exodus and demanded the movement be halted.

Both East Germany and Hungary are Warsaw Pact nations.

Most of the new East German emigres are skilled young workers and their families, fed up with conditions in their hardline homeland.

Many of them went straight to relatives already living in West Germany.

East Germans who had camped outside the West German Embassy in Prague, Czechoslovakia, also hoping to go West, gave up after promises they would not be punished. Some had been there for weeks.

Typhoon Sarah blamed for deaths, damage

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Typhoon Sarah lashed Taiwan with heavy rains and high winds for a second day on Tuesday, killing at least 11 people and leaving nine missing, officials said.

They said the typhoon set off landslides, immobilized transportation, flooded crops and broke a Panamanian freighter in two.

The 12,000-ton Lung Hao with 26 Turkish and Indian crew broke apart Monday off Hualien, 110 miles southeast of Taipei, and rescuers still are looking for five crew members believed stranded on the vessel.

Four sailors swam ashore Monday, and 17 were rescued Tuesday.

Hualien was the hardest-hit area, with four people reported dead.

An Australian teacher, Jonathan B. Watts, 26, died Monday when swept into the sea while touring the harbor there with other instructors from a nearby English-language center, police said.

Stockings stop sewage; several sick

HELSINKI, Finland (AP) — Hundreds and possibly thousands of people became ill when pantyhose clogged the sewage system in the town of Orivesi and caused drinking water to be contaminated, newspapers reported Tuesday.

Local officials in the southern town said dozens of pantyhose had blocked the sewers, causing overflowing and contamination of water pipes and the water table.

The blockage was discovered Monday. "It looked like someone had deliberately stuffed a whole year's supply of tights into the pipes," Heikki Seppala, a local construction engineer said.

Half of the doctors on duty and nurses at the local health center fell ill, the reports said.

First Lady plans tour of Texas next week

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — First Lady Barbara Bush is planning to tour the restored Majestic Theatre and campaign for literacy programs on a Texas trip tentatively planned for next week.

Sondra Haley, Mrs. Bush's deputy press secretary, said Tuesday that the first lady is considering a three-city tour of Texas early next week.

While White House officials say the trip is not definite, Jocelyn Straus, a San Antonio Republican activist and a longtime friend of Mrs. Bush, said she has learned that the first lady definitely will make the trip.

"She will be here (next) Tuesday," Straus said. "She wants to see the building and what we've done."

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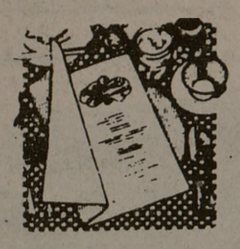
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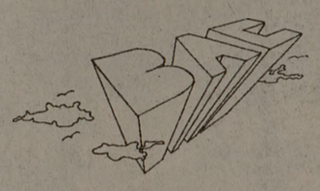
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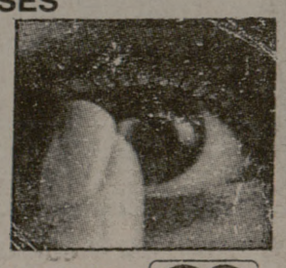
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