

Wednesday, September 20, 1989

Inmate faces death in Huntsville today for Houston contract killing

No appeals planned for man described as 'Satan personified'

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — A Texas prison inmate convicted of three slayings and linked to two others and described in corrections records as "Satan personified" faced death by injection early Wednesday.

No appeals were pending Tuesday for James Paster, 44, sentenced to death for the contract killing of a 38-year-old man in Houston in 1980, Bill Zapalac, an assistant attorney general, said.

Earlier Tuesday, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals refused to grant a reprieve. His attorneys contended jurors at Paster's trial should have been allowed to consider the mitigating evidence of his abused childhood.

"It's a go," Stanley Schneider, Paster's attorney, said. "There's going to be an execution."

Schneider said he spoke with Paster by telephone Tuesday and found his client upbeat, but declined to divulge the nature of the conversation.

Paster, a former lounge singer and Elvis Presley impersonator, also is serving a life prison term for a brutal rape and murder of an 18-year-old Conroe woman who had a nail driven up her nose by Paster to ensure that she was dead. Stephen McCoy, Paster's co-defendant in that case, was executed earlier this year.

Paster also pleaded guilty to the slaying of a Channelview woman and has confessed to killing two other Houston-area women, although he never was tried for those offenses.

In April, Paster and another condemned killer

unsuccessfully tried to escape from death row by squeezing through a 1-foot-square air vent and sawing through an exhaust fan opening.

"I'm about as smart as a box of rocks," Paster, whose left arm is adorned with a large tattoo of a swastika with the word "Hero" written through it, said in a death row interview. "I'm not trying to justify any darn thing. There's no justification

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— James Paster

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Paster was condemned for the Oct. 25, 1980, shooting death of Robert Edward Howard, for which he said he was paid \$1,000 and a motorcycle. Howard was gunned down as he emerged from a Houston bar.

"Had I ever known this individual, had a drink or beer with him, I wouldn't have done it," Paster

said. "It made it easier, like hitting someone on the highway. I never got out of the car.

"It's not hard to take a life — one shot, 20 feet away, in the head."

Howard's ex-wife, Trudy Howard LeBlanc, 42, is serving a life prison term for hiring Paster and brothers Gary and Eddie LeBlanc to commit the murder. Two months after the slaying, Trudy Howard married Eddie LeBlanc.

Eddie LeBlanc, 34, also is serving life, while Gary LeBlanc, who Paster said hired him, gave him the gun and drove him to the murder site, is serving a 35-year term in exchange for testifying against Paster and others.

Paster served time in California and was in custody in Alabama when he was arrested for the Howard killing. California officials described him as having serious sexual problems and the potential for being extremely dangerous.

Paster, who said capital punishment is justified in a case like his, said he would prefer to be remembered for his sense of humor.

"It's the only thing they can't take away," he said.

Asked how he would like to be remembered, he replied, "One hell of a lot of fun. If you knew me, I would be an unforgettable character. I'm a very likable individual."

Paster would be the third inmate executed in Texas this year and the 32nd since 1982 — the most of any state since the Supreme Court in 1976 allowed capital punishment to resume.

Brown Bag concert features San Antonio flamenco guitarist

By Andrea Warrenburg

Of The Battalion Staff

A noon performance today by Miguel Rodriguez, a flamenco guitarist from San Antonio, is one of a series of weekly concerts on the Texas A&M campus affording students, faculty and staff a change from the noise and boredom of the daily routine.

Brown Bag Concerts, held Wednesdays in 402 Academic, feature a variety of local, national and international musical talent. The concerts are sponsored by the Department of Philosophy and Humanities and the OPAS Stark Series.

Rodriguez has toured the United States, Canada and Europe and traveled extensively in Spain, researching the musical traditions of its famous cities. He will make a brief appearance on the A&M campus as a part of the Brown Bag Series.

"The concerts are an opportunity to present a varied set of musical programs for people to enjoy during the noon hour as a break from their daily routine—a kind of musical dessert," said Werner Rose, coordinator of music in the Department of Philosophy and Humanities.

Rose was instrumental in starting the concert series on campus last fall. Faculty, students, staff and Bryan-College Station locals enjoyed 23 concerts last year, including an octet, a quartet, cellists, pianists and guitarists.

Rose said the response last year was so great that people often were crowded in the hallway outside the music room in 402 Academic to listen to the concerts.

"We want people to come and make music a part of their day," Rose said.

The concerts will be broadcast live on KAMU-FM.

Business seminar offers assistance to entrepreneurs

By Cindy McMillian

Of The Battalion Staff

Entrepreneurs face great risks when they put in their own businesses, but they don't have to go through the process alone.

The Bryan-College Station Small Business Development System offered an orientation Tuesday night for small business owners and potential entrepreneurs interested in classes about business development.

"You need to be prepared before you start a business," Mary Lee, Associate Research Sociologist for Technology Development, told a group of about 50 people. Defining a market, projecting when your business will clear a profit and anticipating personal financial hardships are all part of business planning, she said.

Entrepreneurs also should consider which businesses are needed in our area. Dr. Judy Appelt of the Council for Economic Action said an analysis performed on the Bryan-College Station job market will help class participants decide if their businesses are feasible.

The Urban Business Identification Study, a marketing analysis conducted by the CEA, identified 65 local "under-supplied industries." These under-supplied industries, Appelt said, are types of small businesses that exist in smaller-than-average numbers in our area.

Another feature of the course is its mentor program. Lynne Sprinsky, Senior Business Consultant for Technology Business Development, said that business

leaders in the community will act as mentors and be assigned to participants in the second course.

"Mentors will be resource people who can give specific, one-on-one advice," she said.

Accountants, lawyers and bankers are among those on the mentor roster, she said, but class participants probably will be matched with mentors in businesses similar to theirs.

Some potential entrepreneurs in "over-supplied industries" or with unrealistic business plans may decide not to put in a business, she said, but she doesn't consider that a failure.

"Preventing a failure means we've been a success," she said.

Classes in business development and management will be offered this fall by SBDS in three parts. The first course is a 16-hour introduction to help participants determine whether business ownership is a good idea for them.

The second course involves 54 hours of practical training in defining a business plan. Both those who are already in business and those planning a new business can benefit from the course, Lee said.

The course wraps up its third stage with a series of special topics including a tax workshop, business etiquette course, computer instruction and basic accounting training.

Each course has limited space available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those interested may contact Jane Moseley of the Bryan-College Station Small Business Development Center at 823-3034.

FBI, federal banking officials investigate possible tie between syndicate, failed bank

Houston (AP) — The FBI and federal banking officials are investigating a possible link between an organized crime syndicate and the takeover of at least one failing Texas bank, according to a broadcast report.

KTRK-TV of Houston reported Tuesday ResourceBank of Spring Branch was the victim of a syndicate takeover last year and the subsequent loss of some \$13 million in funds.

"I'd like to have my hands on them," Sid Atlas, former chairman of the board for ResourceBank, told KTRK in a copyright story. "Besides what they did to my group personally, I think it is just a horrible thing in the state of our economy that these things can happen."

ResourceBank was taken over in a stock buyout in October and shut down by federal regulators in December.

"They were stealing from the bank as if they had robbed the bank by gunpoint," according to a confidential government memo obtained by the station.

KTRK reported the scheme may be connected with several such takeovers in at least nine states and including some seven financial institutions in Texas.

The station based its reports in part on confidential federal documents. Some such documents involved investigation by the Justice Department, the FDIC and federal banking fraud investigators in Washington.

The station reported the federal probe should be complete Oct. 1.

"Right now, we're in the initial stages of the investigation," Rolando Moss, media spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, told the Associated Press. "At this point, we're just looking at ResourceBank."

Moss said the FBI began investigating a connection between organized crime and stock buyouts of the bank about eight to 10 months ago.

"We really haven't made any determination of whether it is one group or several," Moss said.

KTRK reported alleged syndicate members used a stock buyout to gain control of ResourceBank last October. Then, in one 36-hour period, millions of dollars were funneled to an alleged dummy firm, Utah-based Landcor, through complicated wire transfers. A cashier suspicious of the transfers called federal regulators.

"Something like \$12 million to \$15 million went out that day," Atlas said. "Yes, we stopped it and we did get most of it back, but it was a bad enough situation to cause the bank to fail."

KTRK reported the alleged multi-million-dollar firm, Landcor, really

is run out of a Salt Lake City home where the corporate officers — Donna and James Barrus — are part of a civil lawsuit brought by federal regulators. No criminal charges have been filed in the case.

"The complexity of tracing all of the dollars, all of the paper trail to find where all of the money goes through several different levels of laundering makes it very difficult to prosecute and prove," said Steve Shaw, a Houston attorney working with the station in its investigation. He is a former assistant U.S. attorney and a white-collar crime expert.

The station reported the alleged takeover scheme could involve banks and thrifts in seven Texas cities — including Balch Springs, Shallowater, Belton, Kerrville, Dayton and Hous-

ton — and eight other states.

In its copyright story Monday, KTRK reported Woodway Bank & Trust of Houston almost became a victim of the ring less than three months ago. The station said bank board members became suspicious and turned in a group that was buying up stock in the troubled institution.

"They're vultures picking on a carrion of a sick industry," Texas Banking Commissioner Ken Littlefield said of such alleged syndicate activities.

KTRK reported the latest schemes may be related to some alleged syndicate activity at Balboa National Bank in San Diego two years ago.

Boulter discusses America's energy situation with College Republicans

By Todd Connelley

Of The Battalion Staff

Former Congressman Beau Boulter claimed that he will work closely with other members of Congress to come up with a clear and definite plan for America's energy situation.

Boulter, in a speech delivered to about 75 members of the College Republicans Club, said that America is more vulnerable to imported sources of energy, such as crude oil, than ever before.

"At present, 50% of our energy comes from foreign countries, most of that coming from the very volatile Persian Gulf Region," Boulter said.

"I don't think we should remain hostage to that situation very much longer."

Boulter is an "unofficial" candidate for Texas Railroad Commissioner. He said he plans to announce his candidacy sometime in October.

The duties of the Texas Railroad Commissioner are more important than most people perceive.

"The Commission remains the most powerful regulatory agency in state government," Boulter explained.

"The major areas of responsibility are energy, the environment, intrastate transportation and safety," he said.

But the commissions most powerful task is regulating the oil and gas industry.

"It's the agency that comes up with the rules that decide where an oil well is located, how much gas a well can produce and how a man or

woman who is an independent producer is going to market that oil or gas," he stated.

Boulter said that if he was elected in November a major portion of his new energy plan would be utilizing natural gas.

"I would be in a position as Commissioner to bring about new markets for natural gas here in Texas," he said.

"My goal is to do it in such a way that the guy in far West Texas with a little gas well can have equal access to a market that Exxon or any other major producer has," he said.

Boulter, who was defeated in a Senate race with Lloyd Bentsen last fall, served on the Energy Subcommittee of Government Operations and chairman of the Energy Task Force while serving Congress.



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