

# Town still gripped by pain of bus accident

## Truck driver distraught by deaths Investigators recreate accident to answer questions

MISSION (AP) — The driver of the soft-drink delivery truck that struck a school bus is dazed and distraught over the accident that killed 20 school children and injured 63 others, his family and neighbors said.

Ruben Perez, 25, remained at his parents' home in rural Mission. He was the driver of a truck that went through a stop sign and struck the school bus, sending the bus into a water-filled pit. Twenty junior-high and high-school children were killed in the accident Thursday morning.

Perez refused to answer questions from investigators on Saturday, said National Transportation Safety Board member Lee Dickinson.

"His counsel advised him not to talk to the Safety Board and to exercise his Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights," Dickinson said. "So we did

not talk to the driver."

Perez's uncle, Tieurcio Santiago, said his nephew is not ready to talk about the accident.

"I haven't talked to him too much," Santiago told the *Dallas Morning News* on Saturday. "He's in bad shape emotionally. He's doing all right, but he's in shock right now."

Perez initially told authorities that the truck's brakes failed. Dickinson said preliminary NTSB tests showed that "the brakes did work," although they were not perfectly adjusted. The truck passed state inspection last month, he said.

A neighbor of Perez said many people in the area have thought of Perez. "I don't know him, but I felt like calling him today," Alma Bean said. "I feel sorry for him. You're innocent until proven guilty."

ALTON, Texas (AP) — Grief-stricken neighbors watched Sunday as a soft-drink delivery truck and a school bus loaded with federal investigators recreated the events leading up to a collision that killed 20 students.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the re-enactment helped determine the speed the bus was travelling and from what distance it and a Dr Pepper truck could have been spotted as the vehicles approached the collision intersection.

"In the range of 150 feet was the first time that either vehicle could see the other one," NTSB member Lee Dickinson said. "We feel reasonably comfortable that the speed of the bus was somewhere in the range of, give or take, 30 miles per hour."

The speed limit along the road on which the bus was travelling is 55 mph.

As the sun began to peak through nearby palm trees, investigators and law officers gathered next to the water-filled caiche pit which the bus plunged into during the Thursday accident. The

accident was reconstructed about the same time of day as the actual 7:25 a.m. wreck.

Helping in Sunday's test was 14-year-old Edna Morales, who was the last student to board the bus before Thursday's crash. Morales, who had cuts on her neck and face and bandages on her left arm and right leg, came to the site because she thought it might cure her of the nightmares she has suffered since the accident.

Morales told investigators she boarded the bus about 800 feet from the crash site. She described to what level the bus accelerated after making its last pickup. That information helped investigators arrive at the approximate 30 mph speed.

In conducting the tests Sunday morning, investigators were among 42 people who boarded a school bus similar to the one involved in the accident. They also used a Dr Pepper truck pulling the same trailer involved in the accident so that the trailer's brakes could be tested. Investigators found no evidence of brake failure on the trailer.

In addition to sight distance and speed tests, the transportation team drove the vehicles slowly

up to the suspected point of impact in an attempt to determine how they struck each other.

A previous NTSB inspection indicated no evidence of brake system failure on the truck, disputing truck driver Ruben Perez's claim to Texas Department of Public Safety officers that the brakes had failed.

Acting on the advice of his attorney, Perez refused Saturday to talk with NTSB officials, citing his Fifth and Sixth Amendment rights.

While some members of the investigation team were headed back to Washington Sunday afternoon, others remained behind to complete interviews with bus driver Gilberto Pena, truck driver assistant Ruben Pena, rescue workers and students.

On Monday, NTSB officials plan to further examine the bus wreckage, particularly looking at a v-shaped deformation in the top of the bus that Dickinson said may have been caused when the bus struck a stop sign.

# Whitmire leads race

## Poll puts mayor 18.7 points ahead of Hofheinz

HOUSTON (AP) — Mayor Kathy Whitmire, who is seeking a fifth two-year term in the Nov. 7 election, holds an 18.7-point lead over her main challenger and former Mayor Fred Hofheinz, a poll by the *Houston Post* and KHOU-TV shows.

Whitmire leads Hofheinz in virtually every category sampled in a survey of 600 registered voters between Sept. 14-20, the newspaper reported Sunday.

Asked how they would vote if the election were held today, 49.2 percent of those surveyed named Whitmire, 30.5 percent said Hofheinz, 3 percent named another candidate, 17 percent said they were undecided or refused to answer and 0.3 percent said they would vote for neither candidate.

"It seems like this is going to be a very difficult race for Mr. Hofheinz to turn around — very difficult," said Bob Stein, a Rice University political scientist. "At this point I



Whitmire

can't identify an issue that he can do that with."

Stein and Keith Hamm, both of the Rice Institute for Policy Analysis, compiled the results from a random sampling from the county's voter registration lists. The error rate in

rate in the citywide survey is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

James Carville, chief strategist for the Hofheinz campaign, said the

poll's results "are inconsistent with our own data."

"Regardless of what numbers you accept, it's still a long way to Nov. 7," he said. "We are pretty encouraged, and we have got a lot of things left to say."

The poll show Whitmire leading with voters across the board.

She gets 45 percent of white voters' support as compared with Hofheinz's 36.5 percent and 14.9 percent undecided.

Whitmire also leads with a majority of black and Hispanic voters polled.

# Mattox, Richards begin dispute over issue of alcoholic history

AUSTIN (AP) — Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Jim Mattox says a candidate's history of alcoholism is an issue for state leadership, and he says he will bring it up in the 1990 gubernatorial campaign.

Mattox, the state attorney general, has not formally announced his candidacy. The only announced Democrat to this point is State Treasurer Ann Richards, who has openly discussed her 1980 treatment for alcoholism.

Richards, 56, called the treatment the greatest thing that ever happened to her and said that if Mattox wants to make it a campaign issue, "let him raise it."

"In some sense, I think that treatment for this disease has made me an even better candidate and certainly a better officeholder," Richards said. "And the reason for that is that I have had the privilege of getting a real perspective on what is important in life."

Mattox questioned whether a recovering alcoholic has the "vision" to lead the state of Texas. Many recovering alcoholics "still talk about living 'one day at a time,'" Mattox told the *Dallas Morning News*.

"I think you've got to have very strong willed people, with vision, to lead this state forward," he said. "I'm just saying that if drug or alcohol abuse keeps us from having that kind of vision... it could be very harmful for the state of Texas."

Said Richards: "One of the tenets of a... recovery program that is very important to me is humility — the acceptance that I am human. I am not perfect. Never will be. I think we need more of that in public office, rather than big talk and big egos."

Mattox, who says he doesn't drink or smoke and stays away from caffeinated beverages, has "very strong feelings" about alcohol and drug abuse because of his father's problems with drinking.

## Alpine Lamborgini Shuttle Tour

Dazzling Audio-Visual Presentation Over 300 Free Alpine Gifts



**COME SEE**  
this \$175,000 Bright Red Lamborgini Countach  
Tuesday September 26th, 12 - 7 p.m.



The Lamborgini Countach is a rolling monument to the extremes of engineering. Which is why, inside every new Lamborgini you'll find an Alpine CD or cassette deck, Alpine power Amp, and Alpine speakers. Of course, you don't need to buy a Lamborgini to own an Alpine System. You have only to love high performance and pay us a visit.



Alpine 7903 FM/AM CD Player  
4x Oversampling  
Reg. \$650 **SALE \$549<sup>00</sup>**



Alpine 7167 FM/AM Cassette  
Auto-Reverse, Digital Clock  
Reg. \$250 **SALE \$199<sup>00</sup>**

**Great Prices! AUDIOVIDEO Specials!**

Free Layaway  
Full Repair Shop  
Professional Installs

707 Texas Ave.  
696-5719

Guaranteed Best Price  
Cash or Check  
All Credit Cards



**REGISTER YOUR 1989 WEDDING TUXEDOS AND SAVE AT LEAST \$120.00**

With a Wedding Party of six or more you will receive \$10.00 off each Tuxedo Rental plus the Groom's Rental FREE!\*

\*Offer pertains only to complete tuxedo outfits including shoes and socks. Savings may vary. Applies to reservations made after September 24, 1989. No other discounts or promotions may apply. Valid only with this ad thru 10/31/89.

**AI's FORMAL WEAR**

COLLEGE STATION • 693-0947  
1100 Harvey Rd. • Next to Post Oak Mall

## 89-90 Yearbook PICTURES

---

### CLASS OF 1992

September 25-29 A-M  
October 2-6 N-Z

### CLASS OF 1991

October 16-20 A-M  
October 23-27 N-Z

### GRADS, VETS & MEDS

November 6-10  
Everyone

Class of 1990 To Be Announced

---

Yearbook Associates is located at

**707 Texas Ave S.  
Suite 120B**  
(at AR Photography)  
Hours are 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.  
693-8183