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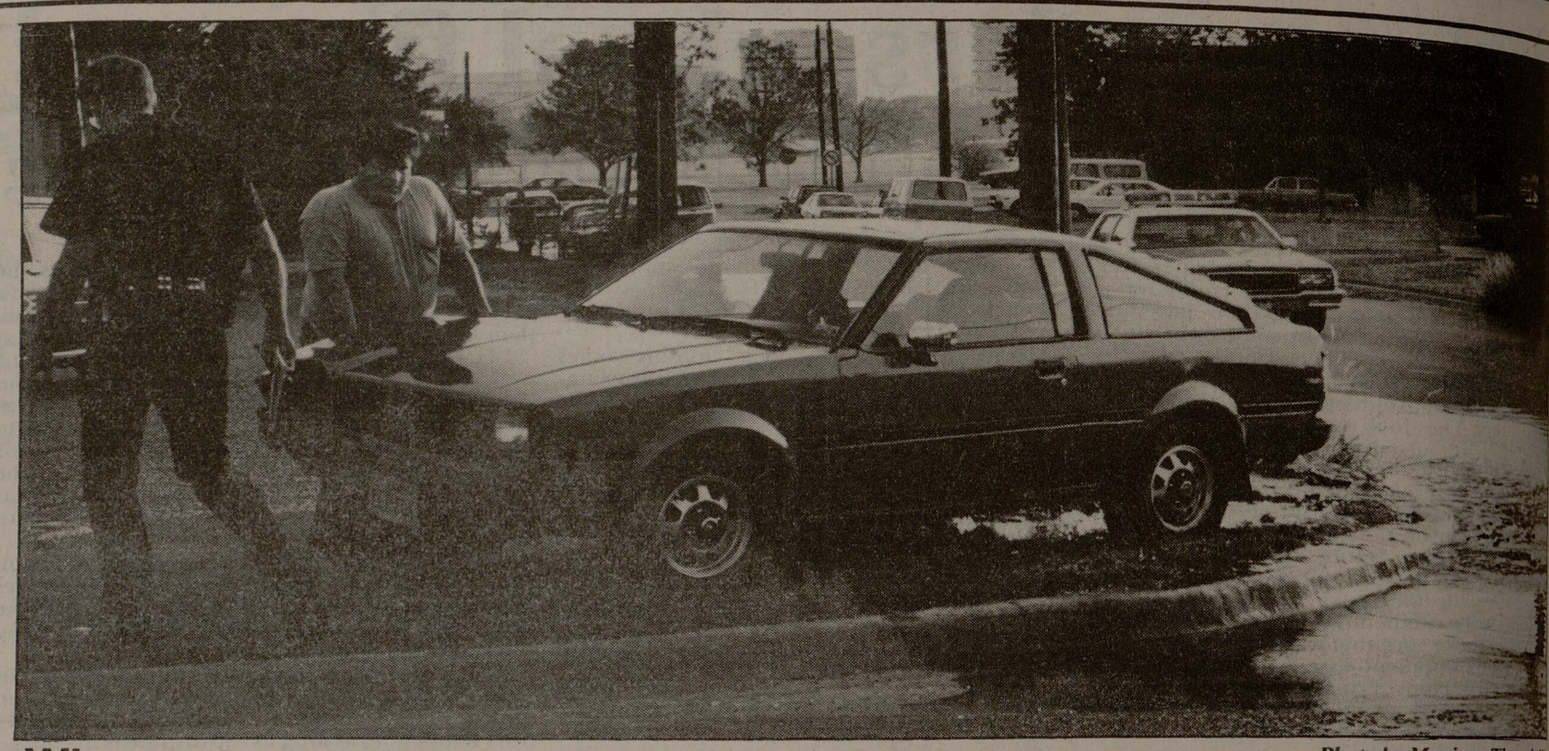

Photo by Monique Threadgill

Whoops!

A College Station man, who refused to be identified, leans on the hood of his car after hitting a fire hydrant at the corner of Lincoln and Foster Streets Thursday. He said he swervred to avoid hitting another car and "over adjusted and hit the fire hydrant." No one was injured.

Bus wreck investigation nears end

National safety board makes plans to interview more survivors

MISSION (AP) — Divers seeking a section of windshield from a shattered bus that careened into a flooded gravel pit Thursday hoped to retrieve yet another clue in the deaths of 20 students.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which also wants to interview more survivors of the wreck one week ago, is in the "wind down" phase of its inquiry, agency spokesman Bob Barlett said.

The partial windshield "should give us a pretty good indication as to where the actual nose of the bus went into the water," he said.

He said investigators want to know if the bus, loaded with students, spun nose-first into the water or hit at an angle after it collided with a soft drink truck. It could be six to eight months before the NTSB issues its report, Barlett said.

Hidalgo County District Attorney Rene Guerra said he was waiting for a final briefing from the NTSB and Texas Department of Public Safety to determine whether the facts justify charges against the truck's driver.

Meanwhile, more South Texas residents passed by the site in Alton of the school bus crash that killed 20 students on a school bus one week ago today, while federal investigators made plans to interview more survivors.

"I came to say a prayer for them and for the ones who are alive also," said Juanita Garcia, whose son was a friend of 18-year-old victim Raul Flores Jr.

At Mission Junior High School, Principal John Abbenante said Thursday that teachers and students were trying to resume normal schedules. Ten students even rode the bus to school today, he said.

"We've tried to normalize it, with understanding," he said, but added some students still had difficulties. "As a matter of fact, we escorted one home yesterday because she couldn't make it through the whole day."

However, he said administrators and teachers were wearing T-shirts in maroon and white, the school colors, in an effort to get in the spirit for Thursday afternoon's junior high football game.

A female student remained in intensive care at Mission Hospital Wednesday, a spokesman said. Eight other students and the bus driver were in the hospital's regular ward, in stable to good condition.

Two others were in stable to good condition at hospitals in McAllen and Edinburg, school district spokesman Harlan Woods said.

The NTSB would like to interview more students who survived the wreck but not enough have yet returned to class, Billie Noon of Mission High School said.

Rafael Cantu, superintendent of Mission public schools' said Wednesday money raised so far for 54 families who had children killed or injured in the accident will allow each family to receive $500 for their various needs.

Lucas fails to stop extradition to Florida

HUNTSVILLE (AP) — As the parents of one of his alleged murder victims watched, condemned killer Henry Lee Lucas lost an attempt Thursday to block his extradition to Florida on more first-degree murder charges.

But his attorney, Rod Ponton, said it could be six months to a year before Lucas, a one-eyed drifter linked to hundreds of slayings around the country, sees Florida. Ponton intends to appeal State District Judge Bill McAdams' ruling.

McAdams rejected Ponton's argument that the Florida warrant was invalid and that Lucas did not have an attorney present when he spoke to Florida investigators.

"He's got substantial defense to the charges," Ponton said. "We have work records . . . that show he was 150 miles away the day before and the day after (the slayings)."

Florida authorities want to try Lucas, 53, on three first-degree murder charges for slayings in 1980 and 1981.

He is accused of the December 1980 shooting death of a gas station attendant, J.P. McDaniel, in Jackson County, Fla.; the February 1981 shooting death of Jerilyn Peoples at her home in Holmes County, Fla.; and the March 1981 strangulation and stabbing of Brenda Jo Burton at her home in Bonifay, Fla.

Court documents indicate Lucas, who was interviewed in July 1988 by investigators from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, admitted involvement in all three slayings.

"Henry Lucas is the world's biggest liar and not the world's biggest serial killer," Ponton said, noting that of 295 murders Lucas has confessed to, records show he was present for none of them.

"Mr. Lucas had a real tough life and the first people who paid attention to him were law enforcement people. This was his way of pleasing them," Ponton said. "You have to be crazy to confess to hundreds of murders you didn't commit."

Among the handful of spectators in the courtroom were Harold and Ruby Murphy, of Graceville, Fla., whose daughter, Jerilyn, is among the three Florida murder victims.

"We got him," Harold Murphy, 62, whispered to his wife as McAdams gave his decision. "We kn[illegible] he'll get the electric chair in Flori[illegible] They definitely have enough e[illegible]dence to convict him in Florida. [illegible] know what he's going to get when [illegible] get him back there and I'll be [illegible] satisfied."

The couple drove from Florida [illegible] Texas to get their first look at Luca[illegible]

"I've lived with this f[illegible] eight years, seven months and [illegible] days," Murphy said. "I feel like [illegible] killed my daughter and I don't [illegible] why he's living."

Sea World

(Continued from page 1)

and Baseball in Orlando and Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven, Fla. The purchase also includes land surrounding the three Florida parks and Sea World of Texas.

Analysts say Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, a leading book publisher, is selling the parks in an effort to pay off a nearly $2.9 billion debt that accumulated when the Orlando-based company fended off a 1987 hostile takeover attempt by British communications mogul Robert Maxwell.

"They (Harcourt Brace) didn't have a whole lot of choice," said Robert Dunlap Jr., analyst for Brown Brothers Harriman in New York.

But in giving up the theme park business, Harcourt Brace also is relieving itself of the chronic management problems and falling attendance at the six parks.

Attendance at the six parks dropped nearly 5 percent last year, due in part to bad weather, but the decline has continued this year, a company spokesman said.

In 1988, sales at the parks were $435 million and pre-tax earnings were $62 million. This year pre-tax earnings were projected to rise to $90 million, analysts said.

Only two bidders for the park a[illegible]tually went public with their pla[illegible] One was a group of former Ha[illegible]court Brace and Sea World exe[illegible]utives led by Sea World founde[illegible] George Millay. The other was fro[illegible] Florida Leisure Acquisition Corp[illegible] which owns the Silver Springs attra[illegible]tion in Ocala.

Harcourt Brace has been in th[illegible] theme park business for 13 years.

The purchase price of $1.1 billi[illegible] includes $975 for the theme park[illegible] and the rest for the Harcourt Brace [illegible] land holdings. The agreement al[illegible] calls for Harcourt Brace to rece[illegible] half of the profits over $100 milli[illegible] from any sale of the undeveloped land included in the deal.

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