

Heart attack kills inmate awaiting hospital transfer

DALLAS (AP) — An inmate who had been awaiting transfer from a county jail to a state hospital for nearly five months died after suffering an apparent heart attack at the jail's medical facility, authorities said.

Freddie Benard Harrison of Dallas, was pronounced dead Saturday morning at Parkland Memorial Hospital.

Harrison, 32, was booked into the Lew Sterrett Justice Center on April 22 for a parole violation. He had been convicted on a cocaine possession charge.

About two months later, a judge decided Harrison was incompetent to stand trial and ordered him to Vernon State Hospital. Lew Sterrett officials said they had not received the paperwork needed to transfer Harrison.

Harrison had been awaiting the transfer since his June 19 hearing.

Dallas County Sheriff's Department spokesman Jim Ewell said Harrison had been taken to a first-floor unit

across from the nursing station after he became ill in his third-floor cell.

"He had been assigned to that (third) floor because of his drug addiction," Ewell said. "That tank is a facility for those with semi-medical conditions."

Ewell said Harrison was being given a tranquilizer prescribed by jail doctors to ease the withdrawal symptoms associated with his cocaine addiction.

But on Saturday, Harrison started vomiting and suffering from diarrhea. Nurses took him to the first-floor unit for observation at about 4 a.m.

After Harrison began complaining of leg cramps, the nurses put him in a wheelchair. Ewell said Harrison apparently had a heart attack shortly before 8 a.m.

Harrison's heartbeat had grown faint by the time paramedics from the Dallas Fire Department arrived at 8:15 a.m., Ewell said.

Investigators for the sheriff's department will make a routine investigation of the death and were waiting for results of an autopsy Sunday, Ewell said.

Mayor accused of using Satan to embezzle accident donations

ALTON (AP) — The state's worst school bus accident has been the talk of the town for two months and become an issue in the mayor's race.

Handbills distributed to the front yards of most of Alton's 2,700 residents Nov. 12 accused Mayor San Juanita Zamora of using satanic powers to embezzle donations sent to City Hall for the families of the 21 students who died in the accident. The mayor denies the charges.

Written in Spanish, the leaflets were titled: "We Have to Unmask the Devil." The rolled handbills were unsigned. Police are investigating, but Chief Manuel Martinez said he's not sure whether any laws were broken.

The incident has outraged the mayor and county officials.

"When you lose a family member, the only thing that can cure that loss

is time," Hidalgo County Judge J. Edgar Ruiz said. "But these families are being reminded of (the accident) and they have been reminded of that constantly for the past two months."

"It's like putting salt in the wound with all this bickering and fighting," Ruiz told the *San Antonio Express-News*.

Nearly \$60,000 in contributions were sent to the Alton City Hall, all of which were turned over to a trust fund at a bank in neighboring Mission, city secretary Lesvia Peralez said.

The funds will be distributed by a Mission School District committee, she said.

Meanwhile, a special mayoral election is set for Jan. 20. In a four-way election May 6, Zamora won by nine votes, 208-199 over Salvador Vela, who later challenged the election.

A state district judge ordered a new election because a charter amendment to extend the term of a member of the City Council was enacted by the council instead of voters.

Vela has been accused of being behind the handbills, the *Express-News* reported. Vela denies the accusations and refused to be interviewed.

He said the handbills may have been retaliation from members of the victims' families angered by Zamora.

"They don't want the lady there, and it's working to my advantage—I admit that—but I didn't do it," Vela said.

The police chief said investigators also are looking into telephone threats to the mayor and have beefed up security around her.

Gobbling up holiday prices Supermarkets overflowing with turkeys, pecans

Holiday shoppers will find that frozen turkeys in Texas supermarkets are the cheapest in years and the bins in produce departments are overflowing with pecans.

Turkeys are cheap because of a five percent nationwide increase in production this year. The plentiful pecans, however, are a little more expensive than in 1988, but still are lower than they have been on the average.

Another holiday item — Christmas trees — will be filling up outdoor lots in a week or two. Prices should be comparable to or slightly cheaper than last year.

Although the holiday harvests in Texas are generally down, they remain huge across the nation. One exception is the main ingredient for pecan pie, but there is a 100-million pound carryover from last year's bumper crop.

In Houston supermarkets, turkey prices of 49 cents to 77 cents a pound are commonplace. One chain is offering the big birds for 39 cents a pound, with a \$30 minimum purchase.

In Dallas, prices are even lower. One chain advertised turkeys for 29 cents per pound.

"Retailers seem to be in a race to see who can sell them the cheapest," says Pat Crane of Fredericksburg, president of Sunday House Foods, a turkey growing and processing firm that is a subsidiary of Houston-based Granada Foods.

Trade reports tell of retail prices as low as nine cents a pound on the East Coast. But turkeys cost grocers substantially more than that.

"If I had whole turkeys to sell right now, they would be 67 cents a pound in 1,000-pound lots," Roane Lacy Jr., of Plantation Foods in Waco, said.

Retailers are using turkeys as loss leaders, luring customers into their stores for a big-ticket shopping visit. "They give you the turkey to get you on the soap," Lacy said.

Raising a turkey costs about 40 cents a pound, live-weight, Crane said. He and Lacy agree that producing turkeys this year has been little more than a break-even proposition.

To make profits, companies such as Sunday House and Plantation shy away from selling frozen turkeys.

Sunday House smokes whole turkeys, produces turkey "ham" by the ton, grinds other parts into sausage and bakes complete Thanksgiving meals sold by delicatessens for \$25 to \$30. Plantation Foods does basically the same thing, but on a larger scale.

Luke Kent of the Sandy community, north of Johnson City, may be the last of the independents who grow their own turkeys. He raises about 30,000 a year, under range conditions, including some of the increasingly rare bronze-feathered types.

Most of this season's pecan crop is yet to be gathered from along the state's creek bottoms and in the orchards. State crop reporters have predicted a harvest of 50 million pounds, a figure likely to be revised downward, compared with 80 million pounds in 1988.

Bad weather hurt the pecan crop in Texas, agriculture experts say.

Transit board meets to decide rail system fate

HOUSTON (AP) — The Metropolitan Transit Authority board meets Monday to consider the fate of a controversial \$1 billion rail system voters approved to link downtown with outlying areas.

In what could be a pivotal decision for the plan, the board is to consider alternatives after receiving the conclusions of a six-month critique initiated by Metro board Chairman Bob Lanier.

Preliminary findings indicate the report will paint an unfavorable picture in terms of ridership and costs of the rail connector.

Lanier already has suggested that the board give the private sector a chance to propose ways to build and finance the rail project before it ditches the plan.

Voters in 1988 approved a system linking the central business district to the Galleria and Post Oak areas in west Houston and Texas Medical Center east of downtown.

Transit observers said they believe Lanier will try Monday to force the board to make decisions on the rail line that could include scrapping the current proposal and opting for privatization.

"That Monday meeting will be decisive," Bob Eury, president of Central Houston, said.

Roles of justice of peace grow with modern laws

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) — Twenty years ago, a justice of the peace could rely on a gut feeling to decide a case. The disputes were for smaller claims — chickens or cows — and the judge's decision was rarely questioned as unfair.

Fast forward to 1989. Now parties can sue in justice court for up to \$2,500, attorneys representing clients are commonplace and justices of the peace have to know something about the law, a legal expert said.

Now the more likely scenario in justice court — also known as "the people's court" — is that both parties will be represented by attorneys and the judge will rely more on case law and statutes than instinct, former Kleberg County Justice of the Peace Keith Bray of Kingsville said.

"Justice court has been referred to as 'the people's court,' but it's becoming not the case any longer," Bray said. "We've become bound by all the rules of the other (higher) courts."

When Bray entered office in 1965, he kept peace in pretty much his own way. Before legislative reforms broadened the powers of justices of the peace and increased their accountability, the common man's judges in urban centers and tiny towns across the state acted on their instincts.

Two decades ago, it would not have been uncommon for neighbors to argue about fences, dogs or cattle,

and it was up to the justice of the peace to bring them together and settle their differences, local judges said.

"The justice of the peace would just try to be fair before, and that would usually work," Richard Alderman, a law professor at the University of Houston, said.

"They (justices of the peace) still should try to be fair, but they also have to be aware of what the law is and what rights all sides have," Alderman said.

Even in situations in which attorneys are not in justice court, Alderman said it still is incumbent on the judge to be familiar with the law.

Under Texas law, justices of the peace are required to attend 40 hours of training when they enter office and 20 hours of training every year thereafter.

"The court has become more sophisticated as far as the law is concerned," Justice of the Peace Ben Garza of Corpus Christi said. "Now you have to be more aware of the laws initiated by the Legislature."

Garza, in his 11th year as Precinct 1, Place 2, judge, said he oversees 300 civil and criminal cases on a monthly basis, in addition to performing weddings and reading rights to Nueces County jail inmates.

"It's a world of difference," Garza said, comparing the current office to that 11 years ago.

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