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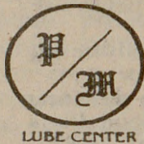
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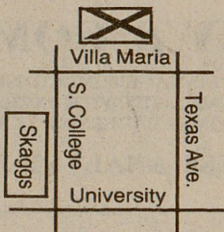
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Judge acquits company of scheming payoff to get government contract

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge Monday acquitted a Texas company and two of its executives in a payoff scheme involving a \$400 million government contract for mail-sorting equipment.

"We're gonna have a real big party when the attorneys get back to Dallas," said Jenny Barker, spokesman for Recognition Equipment Co., based in Irving.

U.S. District Court Judge George Revercomb said prosecutors failed in six weeks of trial to prove that the company knew that a consultant it had hired was kicking back money to Peter Voss, vice chairman of the postal board of governors.

Revercomb acquitted the company, former chief executive officer William Moore and former marketing vice president Robert Reedy of all criminal charges, including conspiracy, theft, receipt of stolen property and two counts each of wire fraud and mail fraud.

Moore and Reedy have been on

paid leaves of absence from REI for the last year and will not return to the firm, Barker said.

REI co-chief executive officer Robert Vanourek issued a statement Monday saying the company is "very pleased" with the ruling and the

"We're gonna have a real big party when the attorneys get back to Dallas." — Jenny Barker, REI spokesman

company is ready to put the case behind it.

On Voss's recommendation, REI in 1985 hired Bloomfield Hills, Mich., consultant John Gnaou, who then made payments to Voss. Gnaou and Voss eventually pleaded guilty in the scheme and were sentenced to prison terms. Voss headed Ronald

Reagan's 1980 Ohio presidential campaign while Gnaou headed Reagan's 1980 Michigan campaign.

The prosecution emphasized that Reedy at one point asked Gnaou what his arrangement was with Voss. Gnaou responded that it was better for Reedy not to know, according to testimony Gnaou gave in the case.

"The fact that Reedy entertained suspicions cannot be equated with a prima facie case of guilty knowledge and an intent to join a conspiracy," Revercomb said. The law does not require "that private individuals must conduct independent investigations of their business associates."

Although Voss recommended Gnaou, that fact does not mean that REI knew or should have known of the kickback scheme, the judge said.

"The inference that Reedy had to know in this context that Voss, a high and respected official of the United States government, who had been appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by

the United States Senate, was instituting a scam to fill his own pockets is not justified," Revercomb said.

The judge read his decision from the bench following the close of the prosecution's case.

One part of the prosecution case concerned the installation of a new postmaster general, a candidate recommended by Moore.

William Spartin, the president of Gnaou's firm as well as a Postal Service consultant on personnel matters, asked Moore for suggestions for the job of postmaster general.

Moore suggested former American Airlines chairman Albert V. Casey, a neighbor of Moore's.

The government alleged that Spartin was a "mole" who was a consultant for the Postal Service on personnel matters at the same time he was secretly working for Gnaou's firm and REI.

Revercomb said there was ample evidence that Postal Service management had known for some time about Spartin's dual role.

The inference that recommending a candidate for postmaster general "is tantamount to taking over the personnel decision-making process of the board of governors is not supported by the evidence," the judge said.

After Revercomb's decision, Moore criticized Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Valder, who headed the prosecution team.

Texas Senate debates legislation to change workers' comp system

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Senate debated into the night Monday, waging a fierce legislative battle over Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby's plan to overhaul the workers' compensation system.

More than two dozen amendments to Hobby's plan were debated as opponents fought for major changes in the proposal. Several amendments were adopted.

Hobby's plan would raise maximum weekly benefits for injured workers from \$238 to \$416, but opponents of the measure say it would limit permanent injury benefits and restrict jury trials in disputed workers' comp cases.

Sens. Kent Caperton and Carl Parker have an alternate plan that is preferred by labor groups and trial lawyers who represent injured workers.

"We're working on some amendments that will cure some of the ills in this bill that cause workers to be treated unfairly," Parker, D-Port Arthur, said.

Lawmakers have been in special session to try and overhaul the system of compensating employees injured on the job. Texas businesses pay among the highest premiums in the nation and workers receive some of the lowest benefits.

The Hobby plan cleared an initial hurdle when it was brought up for consideration without the traditional two-thirds vote.

Caperton, D-Bryan, said opponents agreed to waive the two-thirds rule in order to gain "good will from those who have accused us of being obstructionists."

Sen. John Montford, a co-sponsor of the Hobby plan, said he was shocked the bill was brought up without objection. "It's like you got ready for a football game and the other team didn't show up," Montford, D-Lubbock, said.

Three key votes were taken during the first four hours of debate:

- Senators defeated, 20-11, a proposal by Montford that would

have limited to one year's salary the damages possible against an employer who was found guilty of firing an employee for filing a workers' comp claim.

- A second Montford proposal, to limit punitive damages against insurance companies for wrongly denying benefits, failed by one vote.

- Parker won passage, 17-14, of an amendment that would reduce from six to three the members of the board that would administer the workers' comp system.

Caperton said other amendments would be proposed to remove Hobby's proposed restrictions on jury trials and alter a schedule of awards for permanent disabilities, such as the loss of a finger.

Hobby's opponents said the so-called impairment schedule is unfair because it awards the same amount of money regardless of what a worker does for a living.

House Speaker Gib Lewis said he hoped his chamber would be able to vote on a compensation bill from the Senate before Thanksgiving.

In another development, Hobby said the second part of his proposal, which calls for mandatory compensation coverage and reforms the pool for employers who cannot buy compensation insurance, is integral to lowering rates.

House leaders say they oppose that part of Hobby's plan.

Father faces charges for murder of 2 sons found slain in Maine

SHAPLEIGH, Maine (AP) — A Texas man who was being sought for allegedly kidnapping his two sons in a custody battle was arrested on a murder charge Monday after the boys, ages 4 and 6, were found slain along a dirt road, authorities said.

Roy Irwin Abbott, 52, of Denton was being held without bail in the York County Jail in Alfred, state police said.

Investigators learned of the slayings when Abbott turned himself in at the county sheriff's department shortly before noon, Trooper Randall Nichols, a state police spokesman, said.

Police found the boys' bodies along the road, about a half mile from a camp on Silver Lake where Abbott was reported to have been staying in a cottage, Nichols said.

The names of the boys were withheld pending confirmation but

Nichols said they were Abbott's sons.

The two boys were pronounced dead at the scene and there were gunshot wounds on both bodies, Nichols said, adding that a weapon had been recovered. Autopsies were to be performed Tuesday to determine the cause of death.

Nichols declined to say what kind of weapon had been found.

Denton police had issued an arrest warrant for Abbott on Oct. 16 on charges that he kidnapped the boys in a custody dispute, Nichols said, adding that Abbott's name was listed in the National Crime Information Computer.

The trooper said officials did not know whether Abbott had any connection to Maine or why he was in the state. Shapleigh is located in extreme southwestern Maine near the town of Sanford.

Abbott was scheduled to be arraigned at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Commissioner worries about students failing required TEAMS test

AUSTIN (AP) — More Texas high school students are passing the state's graduation exam, but the state's chief educator is concerned about those who failed.

Preliminary results of the latest state graduation exam showed that 77 percent of the 181,236 juniors who took the exit-level test in October passed all tests taken, up from 75 percent last year.

In addition, 59 percent of the 24,359 seniors who took it passed all tests, up from 55 percent in 1988, the Texas Education Agency reported Monday.

However, state Education Commissioner W.N. Kirby said he is concerned about the number of seniors who will have to take it again in May to get diplomas.

"Local school districts must ensure that these students get the remediation they need to enable them to master the minimum skill level," Kirby said.

"We must improve our instructional

programs so that all students meet our current standards. In the future, our students will have to be better prepared and the emphasis will be on increasing these standards," he said.

Students who do not receive a high school diploma because they fail one or more sections of the TEAMS — Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills — test are eligible to retake that section each time the test is given.

Most seniors taking the exam were students who failed to pass one or both sections in two previous attempts last year. Sixty-two percent of these students passed the math section, up from 57 percent last year, while 68 percent passed English, the same as last year.

Among juniors, 80 percent passed the mathematics section of the test, up from 78 percent last year. Passing rates on the English language arts section remained at 90 percent, the same as 1988.

What's Up

Tuesday

MSC RECREATION: will have a general meeting at 5 p.m. in 124 MSC. Call Kristie Buchman at 847-0266 for more information.

SADDLE AND SIRLOIN CLUB: will have a meeting at 7 p.m. in 115 Kleberg. Yearbook photo will be taken at 8 p.m. in Zachry.

AGGIES FOR CLAYTON WILLIAMS: will hold a general meeting at 8:30 p.m. in 501 Rudder.

FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES: will have a Christian fellowship at 9 p.m. in the lettermen's lounge in G. Rollie White. For more information call Dusty Gotcher at 696-6687.

MULTICULTURAL SERVICE CENTER: Rudy Rodriguez, former student who presently attends Harvard Law School, will speak on Harvard Law School from 2 to 3:30 p.m. in 145 MSC.

ECONOMICS SOCIETY: will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Cafe Eccel.

TAMU FLYING CLUB: will have its monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. at TAMU Flying Clubhouse.

GAY & LESBIAN STUDENT SERVICES: will have a presentation on biological evidence for homosexuality at 8:30 p.m. in 305 A&B Rudder. For more information 847-0321.

TAMU SURF CLUB: will show "Atlantic Crossing" at 8:30 p.m. in 701 Rudder.

TRIATHLON CLUB: will discuss current direction of Tri Fed/USA at 7 p.m. at the Flying Tomato.

RUSSIAN CLUB: will have a bake sale from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the rotunda of the Academic Building.

A&M CYCLING TEAM: will take team picture for the yearbook at 3:30 p.m. at Rudder Fountain. Wear your jersey if you have one.

DUNN HALL STAFF: presents "The Beer, The Bod, & The Porcelain God," a program on the effects of alcohol on an R.A.'s body at 8 p.m. in the Commons Lobby (Dunn side).

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS STEP STUDY: will have a general discussion at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: will have a general discussion at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

Wednesday

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: will have a general discussion at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: will have a general discussion at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to **The Battalion**, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.