

Friends turn in accused killer

Tour of murder scene leads police to suspect

CONROE (AP) — A 20-year-old's tour of a murder scene for friends helped police put together the case they needed against a juvenile accused in the rape-slaying of a 16-year-old girl and the killing of her 9-year-old sister.

A 16-year-old boy, charged with capital murder and sexual assault, reportedly told police he went into a rage after Gracie Purnhagen, 16, broke off their relationship. Gracie and her sister, Tiffany, were found dead in a wooded area. They were reported missing last Thursday.

The case came together after Richard Scott Schuschu, 20, told some friends about the slayings and took them to see the bodies, authorities said.

"Fortunately, some of these people related what all they knew to police," Montgomery County District Attorney Peter Speers, said.

The 16-year-old boy told investi-

gators he picked up Gracie and Tiffany at a bowling alley and they drove to a wooded area, where Gracie and the boy got out of the truck to discuss their relationship, Sheriff Joe Corley said.

"They (the 16-year-old boy and Gracie) had a stormy relationship," he said. "It seems he's very possessive of his girlfriends." He became enraged after Gracie said she was going to move to North Carolina with her family.

Corley said the 16-year-old told officers he raped and strangled Gracie, then stabbed her several times with a pocketknife. Tiffany was strangled but not sexually assaulted, Corley said.

The sheriff said the boy placed the bodies head to head in the woods and drove to Humble to ask Schuschu to help him dispose of them.

The pair allegedly returned to the woods in Schuschu's station wagon

in the pre-dawn hours Saturday, planning to dump the bodies in water with wire and cinder blocks, the sheriff said. For unknown reasons, they didn't.

While leaving, Schuschu was stopped by a sheriff's deputy on outstanding traffic warrants. When he was released, the pair went back, but again did not move or hide the bodies.

Schuschu later told friends about the killings and took them to the scene.

He was charged with capital murder, but those charges will be dropped because he did not take part in the killings, Speers said. The boy was taken into custody Tuesday.

Police haven't released the boy's name because he is a juvenile. He remained jailed Wednesday.

Drought, harsh winter stall killer bees' journey north

WESLACO (AP) — It's tough to see the bright side of a drought and a harsh winter, but there is one.

They kept the so-called "killer bees" south of the border a little longer than scientists predicted.

Scientists have speculated that the ill-tempered Africanized honeybees could arrive in far South Texas as early as this spring after trapping a confirmed Africanized honeybee swarm last November 1/2 in Sota la Marina, a Mexican town about 150 miles south of Brownsville.

Last month, U.S. scientists trapped two more groups of Africanized bees near the coastal fishing village of La Pesca east of Soto la Marina, but still no closer to the United States.

No other Africanized bees have been found any nearer to Texas.

That's probably because of a prolonged drought and a December freeze that killed much of the vegetation in the area and dried up the food supply for the bees, Anita Collins, head researcher with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Honey Bee Research Lab at Weslaco, said.

"There's no vegetation that is blooming to provide

nectar for the bees to build up their population," she said. Harsh conditions may also have killed some of the bees, she said.

The Africanized honeybees tend to expand their range as colonies become overcrowded, then divide into new swarms that search for new places to colonize, Collins said. Without food, the bee population has not grown enough to produce many new swarms, she said.

Collins said Wednesday it was unlikely any had made their way to Texas just yet, despite a USDA "backgrounder" paper issued Tuesday in Washington which said that "some may have arrived in southern Texas even as you read this."

She said she did not know when they would reach Texas.

The department in April issued a paper predicting the bees' arrival in Texas "some time during 1991-92 by natural spread, although some swarms may arrive sooner."

Africanized honeybees are offspring of African bees that escaped in 1956 from a now infamous research project in Brazil.

Officials face indictments over insurance scandals

AUSTIN (AP) — Officials involved in the largest insurance company failures in Texas and a former state insurance regulator were indicted Wednesday on charges that they bilked policyholders and looted premiums.

Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle said he hoped the indictments and ongoing special investigation into some 60 insurance companies would avert a savings and loan type scandal that "shakes the foundation of the whole industry."

Sen. John Montford, D-Lubbock, who pushed for funding of the insurance fraud unit in the district attorney's office, said, "I think the problem is deep and I think it is serious."

Robert Walker, formerly of Dallas, and former chairman of the board of National County Mutual Fire Insurance Co. of Dallas, has been accused of transferring more than \$9 million in premiums to his personal accounts to pay off debts, make investments into Walker-owned companies and purchase a \$481,000 yacht and \$229,000 helicopter, Earle said.

Walker, indicted on one count of theft, 11 counts of misapplication of funds and two counts of filing a false financial statement, is not in the

country and his whereabouts are unknown, according to First Assistant District Attorney Steve McCleery.

National County Mutual was \$54 million in debt when it was declared insolvent in October, 1988. The bankruptcy rocked the insurance industry and State Board of Insurance, which was criticized for not stepping in sooner to protect the company's 126,000 policyholders.

Several high ranking executives at the state insurance agency and the entire three-member board eventually were replaced and the Legislature adopted an insurance reform package aimed at tightening supervision over the industry.

Also named in the indictment charging Walker with filing a false financial statement is Gene Hardin, another National County Mutual official.

The theft and misapplication of funds charges carry a penalty of two to 20 years in state prison and up to a \$10,000 fine. Filing false financial statements is punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Also on Wednesday, officials with Best Lloyds Insurance Company of Houston were indicted by the special grand jury that has been investigating allegations of insurance fraud since April.

Guerilla raid flares repercussions

Bush breaks off U.S. dialogue with PLO

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) — President Bush broke off America's dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization Wednesday, saying a guerrilla raid on Israel's coast "is sticking in our throat" and must be renounced by Yasser Arafat for the relationship to resume.

"We've given the PLO ample time to deal with this issue," Bush said at a news conference at the Marshall Space Flight Center in the midst of a day of campaigning for Republicans in Alabama and North Carolina.

Bush said Israeli civilians were clearly the target of the May 30 raid, for which the Palestine Liberation Front has taken responsibility. The PLF is headed by Abul Abbas, an Arafat associate and a member of the PLO executive committee.

The attack was thwarted when Israeli defenders intercepted five speedboats when they landed. Four guerrillas were killed and 12 captured. The boats, carrying 16 guerrillas armed with rockets and machine guns, reportedly were dropped off a Libyan ship 120 miles at sea.

"This terroristic act is sticking in our throat," Bush said, declaring he was acting even though his decision could incite new violence in the Middle East.

Bush said he was willing to reopen the talks — which enhanced Arafat's standing in the Arab world — if the PLO condemns the raid, disassociates itself from the action and moves to discipline Abbas, who Bush said, was "the perpetrator."

The PLO last week said, "The PLO position remains unchanged. We are against any military action that targets civilians, whatever form it may take."

The decision comes at a time when U.S. efforts to induce Israel to revive the Middle East peace

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—Thomas S. Foley, Representative

process have run out of energy.

Israel welcomed the administration's decision. A statement issued by the embassy in Washington said Bush's decision "will encourage those Palestinians seeking peace with Israel to seize upon this opportunity to begin a direct dialogue with Israel."

The League of Arab States called the suspension of the dialogue a "blow to peace" and said it "signals a penalty to Arab moderation — especially Palestinian moderation — and rewards Israeli intransigence."

And Faisal Husseini, one of the leading Pales-

tinian nationalists in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, said the United States was "punishing the wrong people." Israel, he said in an interview in Washington, was refusing to match the concessions made by the PLO.

"This will make the radicals and all those who oppose peace strong," he said.

Yael Dayan, daughter of the late Israeli general Moshe Dayan, said cutting off the dialogue "opens the doors to war." Dayan, who is touring the United States with Hussein on behalf of the Israeli Peace Now movement, said Bush's decision signals "the burial of a slow process that had barely begun."

On Capitol Hill, the speaker of the House, Rep. Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., said he supported Bush's decision.

"I think the president sought to find a way to conscientiously continue this dialogue, but it has to be one in which conditions which we set forth ... are respected," Foley said.

Rep. William Broomfield of Michigan, the senior Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also hailed Bush's action.

"America must let Arafat know that the PLO can't talk peace and wage war at the same time," he said, adding:

"President Bush was wise to suspend rather than terminate the talks. Arafat should know that the United States is still willing to cooperate in the search for peace, but not under the barrel of a gun."

Tanker owners pay \$333,700 to assess spill

AUSTIN (AP) — A state and federal agency will receive \$333,700 from the owners of the Mega Borg and its cargo to assess the oil spill from the tanker.

The agreement announced Wednesday is between the Texas Water Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the tanker owner, KS Mega Borg II, officials said.

The voluntary agreement is the first of its kind between state and federal agencies and a tanker owner, the commission said Wednesday.

The study will include how much oil was lost and the impact on shrimp fisheries. It will also monitor how much sand is removed from Texas beaches as a result of the spill.

Special master names fee for work on finance reform

AUSTIN (AP) — A court-appointed special master in the school finance reform case on Wednesday asked the state to pay him \$18,688 for his work — including time spent being interviewed by reporters.

William Kilgarlin was appointed to develop a school finance reform proposal in case lawmakers and Gov. Bill Clements didn't come up with their own plan to meet a Texas Supreme Court order for change.

Kilgarlin, a former Supreme Court justice, left the court before it handed down its order last year. The court ruled the school finance system unconstitutional after finding glaring disparities between rich and poor school districts.

A preliminary proposal was presented by Kilgarlin in state court on June 1 that would shift state money from wealthy school districts and those with a low local tax effort to poor ones with a strong tax effort.

But the same day, the Republican governor and Democratic legislative leaders broke a three-month deadlock to develop their own plan,

which became law. The new law, which would pump \$528 million more into public education this school year, is being challenged by poor school districts.

In a motion filed in state district court, Kilgarlin presented a bill for the work he has done, including fees for services and expenses.

At a rate of \$190 per hour, Kilgarlin asked to be paid for time on such activities as conferences with State District Judge Scott McCown, who appointed him; associate masters; and with experts, attorneys and officials, including Education Commissioner W.N. Kirby and Comptroller Bob Bullock.

Kilgarlin also listed on the bill his swearing-in, and interviews with press, radio and television.

Only two listings are solely for interviews. They are four hours of radio and television interviews, for a total of \$760, on May 11; and a 15-minute telephone conference with a Houston television station, for \$47.50, on Tuesday.

House ponders flag burning issue while Texan touts licensing bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — House members Wednesday pondered whether to amend the Constitution to prevent flag burning while a Texas congressman touted his bill to license the Stars and Stripes.

Rep. John Bryant, D-Dallas, said his plan will pass the constitutional test that last year's flag burning law did not.

The bill creates "a U.S. Flag Commission that would authorize the manufacture of the official United States flag, thereby creating a property right in each flag and allowing us to prohibit the desecration of the official U.S. flag," he said.

Bryant is one of three Texas congressmen who oppose amending the Constitution to prohibit flag burning. He said, "Amending the Constitution is going too far and leaves us in the position of doing damage to the very thing that the flag stands for."

Rep. Albert Bustamante, D-San Antonio, who said he is leaning in support of the amendment, ex-

pressed frustration with the way some members of Congress are viewing the issue.

"I'm bothered by the politics of this thing," Bustamante said. He said that when colleagues talk about making campaign commercials out of their flag stance, "They're not real sincere about the flag."

Aides to Democratic Reps. Martin Frost of Dallas, Jake Pickle of Austin and Charles Stenholm of Stamford said the congressmen were still undecided on the eve of the amendment vote.

Rep. Jack Brooks, D-Beaumont, who pushed the amendment through the Judiciary Committee he leads, said Thursday's vote will be close.

In an Associated Press survey earlier this week, 242 House members were supporting the amendment, 11 leaning in favor, 109 opposed and six leaning against. Fifty-four were undecided and 11 were not available.

"It would be close this week, it

would be close next week," Brooks said.

To become part of the Constitution, the amendment must get 289 votes in the House and 67 in the Senate plus ratification by 38 state legislatures.

President Bush is pressing for approval of the amendment, which would allow Congress and the states to outlaw burning or other desecration of the flag.

Bryant said he would proceed with his bill regardless of the amendment vote. Other congressmen have also offered flag burning bills.

"Even if you pass a constitutional amendment, some statute has to follow," Bryant said.

His bill creates a commission of seven people to be appointed by the president to license the manufacture of the U.S. flag.

Those flags would bear a seal, indicating it is an official flag that may be destroyed only at the expense of a federal penalty.

Correction

A man was incorrectly identified in a Page 4 photo in Wednesday's Battalion. The man carving the tattoo is Gary Rich. The Battalion regrets the error.

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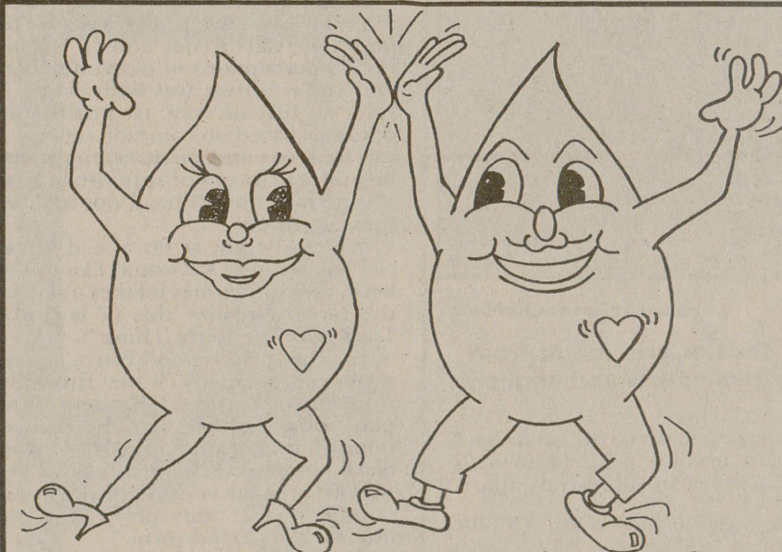
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