

Attorneys question integrity of autopsy results used in trials

Pathologist's indictment raises issue of erroneous convictions

LUBBOCK (AP) — Even prosecutors sometimes wonder about Dr. Ralph Erdmann's bizarre work habits — after all he once lost a head. But they still used the pathologist's testimony to send people to prison, some to death row.

Erdmann's recent indictment on charges of falsifying an autopsy and accusations that he performs "made-to-order" autopsies for police have defense attorneys scrambling to see whether his work led to false convictions.

"You are going to hear Dr. Erdmann's name a lot in the future," said Steven Losch, attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund-Capital Punishment Project in New York. "I know I will be looking into as many capital murder cases involving Dr. Erdmann as possible."

Losch said he will review at least 23 of Erdmann's cases in 41 counties.

On Friday, Losch won the right to exhume the body of 72-year-old murder victim Hilton

Merriman, claiming Erdmann botched the autopsy.

In the hearing on their request, Erdmann invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination 200 times in response to questions about the autopsy.

In the motion to exhume Merriman's body, former Dallas County assistant medical examiner Linda Norton was quoted as saying Erdmann routinely performs "made-to-order" autopsies that support a police version of a story.

Norton said some of Erdmann's findings are "so wrong as to be an insult to the intelligence of an average human being."

Erdmann, 65, was indicted in February by a Hockley County grand jury on charges of falsifying an autopsy on a 41-year-old man. A few weeks later, he resigned his \$140,000-a-year job performing autopsies for Lubbock County, saying he was overworked.

Erdmann said he performed

an autopsy on the 41-year-old man in which he weighed the man's spleen.

But family members noted the spleen had been removed several years before.

The state then indicted Erdmann on charges he billed the county \$650 for the autopsy, which it said he never performed. An investigation showed the body was never cut open.

Erdmann, who faces 20 years in prison if convicted, said he simply erred by not sending the county the correct documents.

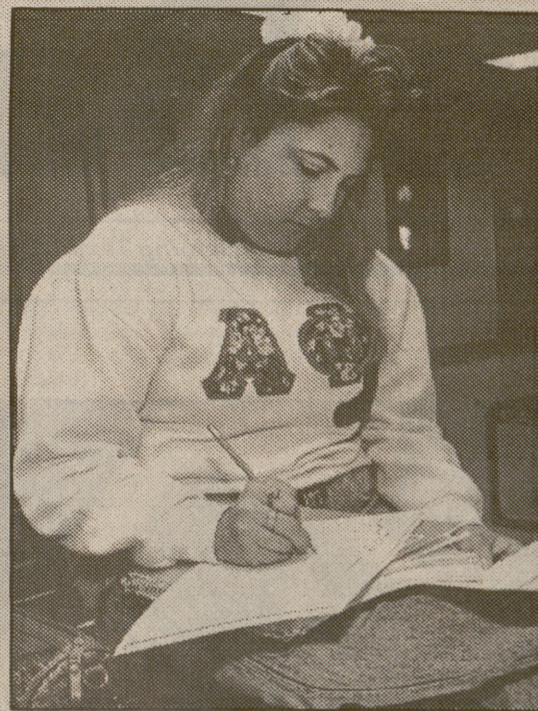
"I tried to apologize, but they wouldn't let me. I made a mistake," he said.

For years, defense attorneys and prosecutors have had reservations about the doctor, who showed up in Childress in 1981 and began a service performing autopsies two years later.

"Some of his work habits are strange," said Randall County District Attorney Randy Sherrod.

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RUN-OFF ELECTIONS



ORTRUN GINGERICH/The Battalion

Holly Horton voted in last week's election. Run-off elections will be held Tuesday, April 7.

Polling for Student Government run-off elections will take place Tuesday. Students can vote in the run-offs even if they did not vote in the first election. The candidates competing in the run-off elections are:

- **Student Body President**
Steve Beller/David Brooks
- **Vice President of Student Development (R.H.)**
Sarah Peebles/Stephanie Thompson
- **Class of '93 Social Secretary**
Melissa Stoesser/Michelle Duchamp
- **Class of '94 President**
Chad King/Greg Reils
- **Class of '94 Vice President**
Michael Crain/Ross McGlothlin
- **Class of '94 Treasurer**
Brian Davis/Brandon Wax
- **Class of '94 Secretary**
Leslie Jacob/Susan Owens
- **Class of '94 Historian**
Andria Cook/Leslie Trevino
- **Class of '95 President**
Greg Givens/Jeb Jones
- **Class of '95 Vice President**
Tracy Kennedy/Tobey Cordasco
- **Class of '95 Treasurer**
Trent Ashby/Shannon Durkin
- **Class of '95 Historian**
Paige Lacke/Doug Watjus

Polling takes place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Blocker Building, Kleberg Center, Sterling C. Evans Library and Zachry Engineering Center, and from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the MSC.

Fraternity holds fund-raiser to show support of education

Lambda Chi Alpha raffle winner to receive \$500 scholarship, chance to swap places with Mobley as 'President For a Day'

By Robin Roach
The Battalion

Do not be surprised if you happen to see University President William H. Mobley sitting in one of your classes in the near future.

As a result of Lambda Chi Alpha's "President For a Day" fund-raiser, one student will be given the chance to see Mobley in a different light.

"President For a Day" is a raffle sponsored by the fraternity in which the winner will receive a \$500 scholarship and the opportunity to trade places with Mobley for one day.

Mobley will attend classes and take notes with the winner of the raffle in order to gain a perspective on student life at A&M.

In exchange, the winner of the raffle will follow Mobley around to see what his typical day entails and learn how the University runs.

Up to four additional \$500 scholarships will be awarded from the raffle, depending on ticket sales.

Lambda Chi Alpha is sponsoring "President For a Day" to acknowledge the importance of education both at A&M and in fraternities in general.

"We're trying to raise the general image of the

Greek system," said Elwin Dobropolski, a member of Lambda Chi Alpha.

The money raised in ticket sales will be used solely for the scholarships which will be awarded, said Jeff Stathatos, coordinator for the event and a member of Lambda Chi Alpha.

"It ('President For a Day') is purely a philanthropy project," Stathatos said. "The event goes to show we're supporting A&M and the education we should be getting."

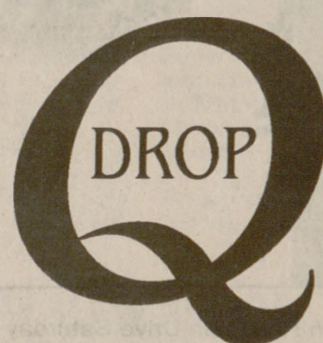
Stathatos said the ultimate goal of Lambda Chi Alpha is to give away \$2500 in scholarships and give needy students the opportunity to receive financial assistance.

Raffle tickets are on sale Monday through Friday and may be purchased for \$1 each at several locations on campus including Blocker Building, the Commons foyer and the MSC. Tickets may also be purchased from any member of Lambda Chi Alpha.

Students may purchase as many tickets as they wish to improve their odds of winning.

The drawing will be held April 17 at 5 p.m. at The Grove. Students do not have to be present to win.

Dr. Mike Leese, the Interfraternity Council advisor, and Mobley (schedule permitting) will be present for the drawing.



Graduate, undergraduate Q-drop period ends Tuesday

Tuesday, April 7, is the last day for graduate and undergraduate students to drop courses with no penalty and receive a Q grade on their transcripts (Q-drop).

Colleges have limits on the number of Q-drops students can have during their academic career.

For more information on Q-drop limits and procedures, contact your academic adviser or department office.

School battles bus violence with use of video cameras

BEAUMONT (AP) — East Texas school bus drivers said new video cameras on board are helping keep students in line, but they are pleading for more aid in dealing with bus violence.

An accidental shooting on a West Orange-Cove Elementary school bus March 26 occurred just two days after an emotional speech by a longtime bus driver at the school board's meeting.

Gail Jefferson, a driver with the district for 21 years, pleaded with the board to take immediate action on enforcing discipline for students who consistently cause problems on the buses.

"I know the shooting was an accident," Jefferson said. "But children have different ideas about what's dangerous. It used to be pocket knives that they were slipping into their backpacks to show. Now it's guns. I guess with television and movies, we can't be surprised at that. But we still need some help on our buses. This incident just makes it more evident."

Jefferson said she has 13 citations on one student who rides

her bus, and the school year not over.

"I have the health and safety of all of the children to worry about," she said. "Seventy lives are at stake every time I have to turn my eyes off of the road and deal with a kid who is causing serious problems."

In some districts, parent volunteer monitors ride the bus to help maintain discipline that drivers can watch the bus. The Lumberton School District in late February installed video cameras in 15 school buses to help maintain discipline, said transportation director Larry Carnley.

Lumberton driver Ann Overstreet said she has noticed a marked difference in behavior since then.

"The students now are a little more conscious of following the rules and not doing things they usually got away with," Overstreet said. "These cameras have given us a little more freedom to keep an eye on traffic without having to look at the students as much, but you still have to remind them to behave."

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