

CLASS OF '96 ELECTIONS

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TWO CHICK-FIL-A MEALS

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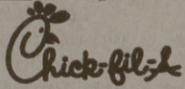
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White UT students claim discrimination

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN— Admission policies at the University of Texas law school are under challenge by two women who contend they were denied admission because they are white.

In a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court, Cheryl J. Hopwood of Universal City and Stephanie C. Haynes of Austin said they are victims of reverse discrimination.

The women said they met requirements and would have been admitted to the UT law school this fall were it not for preferential admission policies that give special treatment to blacks and Hispanics.

Their suit was filed Tuesday, one day after the federal officials announced they had found that the minority admissions program of the law school at the University of California at Berkeley violated civil rights laws. The government said that program improperly shielded minorities from competition with other applicants.

Austin lawyer Steven W. Smith, who represents Hopwood and Haynes, said it was no accident that the suit against UT was filed after the Berkeley announcement.

"Our claim is similar to the one made in the Berkeley case. We're saying that anyone who gets federal funds can't discriminate on

the basis of race," Smith said.

UT officials defended their admissions policies, saying they are in compliance with federal laws. They also said UT was different from Berkeley.

"We're in conformity with the Office of Civil Rights. We're very proud of this program. We have a significant number of minorities," said UT law school dean Mark Yudof.

"In a state as diverse as Texas, it is very important that minorities have access to the legal profession," he said.

Law school figures show about 22 percent of the 512 students admitted to UT's law school this fall

are minorities. Of those, 41

black, 55 Hispanic and 16 Asian.

The lawsuit names the state of Texas and the UT system as defendants. It asks that the court declare UT's affirmative action policies unconstitutional. The women also are seeking to be admitted to next fall's law school freshman class and are asking monetary damages that include attorney fees.

UT officials said there are differences between UT and Berkeley.

"One difference is that there had segregation (by law) UT has a history of discrimination," he said.

Convict receives discharge from prison after serving over 26 years for rape-strangulation

Man poses no threat to society after 1965 slaying of student, attorney says

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HUNTSVILLE— James C. Cross, convicted in the 1965 rape-strangulation of a University of Texas student, walked out of prison a free man Wednesday after serving more than 26 years behind bars.

Cross, who confessed to two slayings but was only tried in one, had served enough "good time" on his 80-year sentence to be discharged from prison with no parole restrictions. He had been denied parole 20 times.

"He's completed his sentence," prison spokesman Charles Brown said. "Once he's completed his sentence he's free."

The gray-haired Cross, now 50, walked down the steps of the Walls Unit about 8 a.m. Wednesday.

Without responding to reporters' questions, he jumped into the back seat of his attorney's blue Cadillac, putting his arm around the woman he had married several years ago while out of prison for a second trial. The car then sped away.

Although the slayings of the two students stunned the state, Cross has led a seemingly quiet life in prison, earning several college de-

grees.

His attorney, David Botsford, read a brief statement Wednesday in which he promised Cross would be a productive member of society and posed no threat to the public.

"Prison guards, wardens, psychiatrists, psychologists and friends that have known Jim Cross, lived with Jim Cross, seen him on a day-to-day basis over the past 27 years, unanimously say he will not be a danger, he will not be a threat," Botsford said.

Brown said Cross "has been pretty industrious" while in prison. "As far as model prisoner, I don't use that term."

Cross was sentenced for the July 18, 1965, slaying of Susan Rigsby, 21, of Dallas. Rigsby and her Chi Omega sorority sister, 21-year-old Shirley Stark, who had dated Cross, stopped at Cross' apartment on their way to register for school.

Both women were strangled. Their bodies were found 12 days later in an Austin field.

Cross initially helped console the victims' families and offered police phony clues in the search for the two women, but he confessed two weeks after the slayings.

Cross, then a 22-year-old English major at UT, told police he put the two bodies in his

closet, covered them with clothes and

visit friends.

He brought a date to the apartment that night and had sex with her a few feet from where the bodies were stashed.

Travis County jurors found Cross guilty of Miss Rigsby's capital murder in 1966, sentencing him to life in prison.

In the 1970s, the murder case against him involving Stark was dismissed, with prosecutors saying the facts and circumstances already had been presented during Rigsby's trial and that key witness had since died.

Cross won a second trial in Rigsby's murder after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling about determining whether a defendant is competent stand trial became state law and retroactive.

He posted bond and gained freedom during a six-week period in 1987 while awaiting a second trial.

While out, he married Gloria Nancarrow whom he met three years earlier when he conducted a prison interview with her while working on her master's degree in criminal justice.

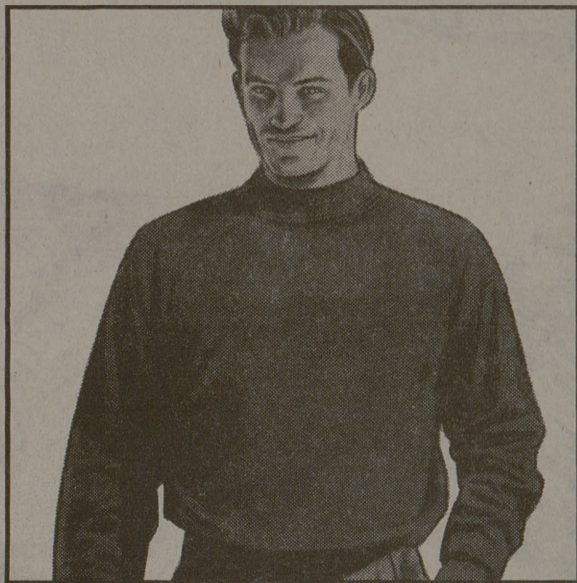
Jurors in the second trial convicted Cross murder with malice and sentenced him to 20 years.

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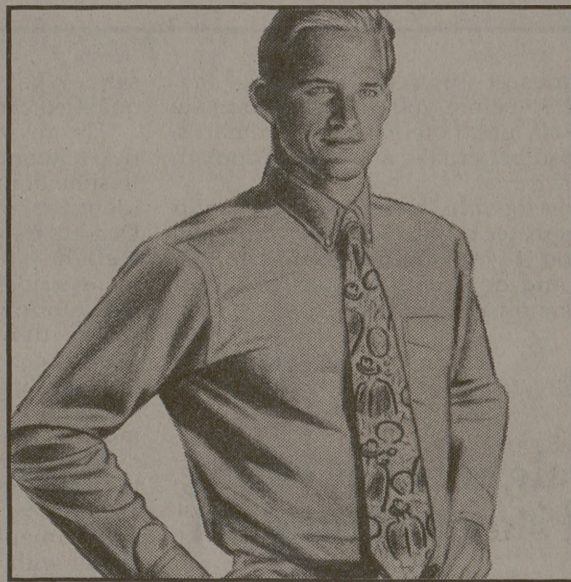
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Dillard's

Freight train derail causes evacuations

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRVING— More than a dozen cars of a freight train derailed Wednesday, said authorities who evacuated some homes and businesses while a hazardous materials team checked for spills.

Several of the 15 derailed cars were leaking, but the materials were not determined to be toxic or hazardous, an Irving Fire Department spokesman said.

Cars from the Burlington Northern freight train derailed about 11:30 a.m. near downtown Irving, a suburb west of Dallas.

Occupants of houses and stores in a two-block area just west of the tracks were evacuated, said Chet Marder, a fire department dispatcher.

Some tankers contained liquid propane, but Marder said they did not pose a danger.

Irving officials closed three streets at the derailment site.

Oil rig blows out in Gulf Spill creates slick

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS— An oil rig blew out in the Gulf of Mexico and was spewing 60 barrels of oil an hour off the southern Louisiana coast, the Coast Guard said Wednesday.

The blowout occurred Tuesday afternoon, Coast Guard spokesman Joe Gibson said.

By Wednesday afternoon, the Coast Guard estimated that the rig had spewed more than 800 barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

The spill created a five-mile-long, 60-yard-wide slick. Two barrier islands — Timbalier and Bear Timbalier islands — were threatened by the spill, but there was no immediate word on environmental damage, Gibson said.

Workers were evacuated from the rig immediately after the blowout and there were no injuries, fires or explosions reported. Gibson said the Boots & Clogs wild well fighting team from Houston had been called to the well.

Greenhill Petroleum of Metairie, the rig's owner, took responsibility for the spill, the Coast Guard said.