

Wilkerson executed for mass killing in Houston

The Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE — A man convicted of capital murder in what was considered the worst single mass killing ever in Houston was executed early Tuesday.

Richard James Wilkerson, 29, was pronounced dead at 12:16 a.m., six minutes after the lethal drugs began flowing into his arm.

"I'd just like to say I don't hate nobody. What I did was wrong. I just hope everybody is satisfied with what's about to happen," Wilkerson said in a final statement.

Two sisters and a friend watched him die. As they sobbed, he told them he loved them. Then he coughed once and there was no further movement.

The slayings were so brutal that Houston police who were summoned to the scene still shudder at the memory of the carnage.

"I remember more than anything the blood, the copious amounts of blood," says J.C. Mosier, a former Houston homicide officer. "It was like a water leak in your home with 2 inches of water on the floor, only this was blood. It was horrible. They were just slaughtered."

Wilkerson's last hope of halting the execution, the sixth in six weeks in Texas and the 13th this year, faded when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected his request for a stay.

In an 8-0 vote at 8:20 p.m. CDT Monday, the high court denied Wilkerson's application for a stay and also a petition to hear Wilkerson's appeal, said Kathy Arburg, a court spokeswoman. Newly appointed Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg did not take part in the vote and no reason was given.

Texas enacts tougher drunken driving penalties

The Associated Press

AUSTIN — Tougher drunken driving penalties are taking effect in time for the long Labor Day weekend, and officials warned Monday that Texans who ignore them will pay.

"For those who decide not to comply, they're going to find a little extra bite in the law," said Assistant Chief Virgil Walsmith of the Texas Department of Public Safety's traffic law enforcement division.

But he and other officials said their main purpose is to deter drunken driving. During the 1992 Labor Day holiday period, 13 of 22 motor vehicle deaths involved people driving while intoxicated, according to the DPS.

"Our goal at the Department of Public Safety for this weekend is not to see how many citations we can issue, or how many

people we can arrest," Walsmith said. "Our ultimate goal ... is to make sure that folks get home safely. We're seeking voluntary compliance."

Some legislation approved this year particularly targets Texans who aren't yet of legal drinking age.

For example, those under 21 arrested for DWI may have their driver's license suspended for up

to a year for refusing to take a breath alcohol test, or registering an alcohol concentration of 0.07 or greater.

Rep. Richard Raymond, who pushed that penalty, said he expects it to be effective because on teen-age boys' list of priorities, driving ranks up there with having a girlfriend.

"If they think that you might take their license away for a year, that's a big deal," said Raymond, D-Benavides.

He said the 0.07 limit was chosen, rather than the 0.10 legal limit, because teen-agers are more dangerous on the road at lower levels of intoxication.

Under other laws that take effect Wednesday, according to the Texas Department of Transportation:

— A judge who gives probation on a first-offense DWI conviction must require 72 hours of continuous jail time. More jail time

is required for subsequent offenses.

— A driver's implied consent to take an alcohol test applies not just on state roads and highways but in other public places as well. This can affect a driver who whips into a parking lot or is driving on a beach.

— Minors caught in possession of alcohol will have to pay a fine and attend an alcohol awareness course on their first offense. Previously, they would just have to do one of those.

— Offenders who receive probation for a third DWI offense will have an ignition interlock device installed on their cars. The devices are aimed at keeping drunk people from starting their cars.

— Abusable glue, aerosol paint and other substances have been added to the definition of intoxication in the DWI statutes.

— Funding will be increased for the state victims' compensation fund.



Dozen Branch Davidians face federal charges, trial

The Associated Press

AUSTIN — If David Koresh's prophecy of Armageddon came true April 19, he escaped the wrath he created on earth and slipped into another world.

But defense attorneys say 12 of his followers are being punished for the messianic leader's actions.

The dozen Branch Davidians who survived the blaze that destroyed the sect's rural compound outside Waco and killed Koresh and scores of his followers face a trial date later this year on federal charges.

"I think what's happening is they want all of the defendants and our client in particular to serve David Koresh's time," said Terry Kirk, co-counsel for sect member Ruth Ottman Riddle, who survived the blaze by jumping out a second-story window.

Riddle is one of Koresh's pupils charged with killing federal officers, conspiracy to murder federal officers and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime of violence.

The charges stem from the Feb. 28 federal raid of the group's Mount Carmel fortress that left four federal agents and six Branch Davidians dead and launched a 51-day standoff.

The stalemate ended April 19 when federal agents pumped tear gas into the compound. A fire broke out and most of the Branch Davidian members were killed, including 17 children.

On Monday, Riddle became the last of the sect members indicted on Aug. 6 to receive a detention hearing.

U.S. District Judge Walter Smith was expected to set a November trial date in Waco for the defendants, who will be tried together.

The government intends to prove that Riddle and 11 other Branch Davidians were sharpshooters who gunned down four special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and wounded 16 others during the botched raid.

Prosecutors have relied on hundreds of photographs, audio tapes and videotapes compiled during and after the standoff to piece together a crime scene destroyed by the fire.

Government attorneys have refused to comment about their case.

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What I wish I'd known before I enrolled at Texas A&M ...

Compiled by Michelle Tremblay

THE BATTALION



"I wish I would have truly understood how much studying is required to succeed at A&M, and that you have to be your own motivator."

— Jill Trotter, sophomore microbiology major from Marble Falls



"I anticipated a lot of problems, but registering was easier than I expected. But catch me in a month, and then see..."

— Chad Bedwell, transfer freshman bioengineering major from Dallas



"I wish I would have known I would love it here so I would not have worried about the decision to come to A & M."

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"How to respond to certain situations culturally. The norm is different for me, and A&M is a different culture within a culture. Before college, I thought to get my head submerged in books and do nothing. But you are supposed to be learning how to communicate, the books are just a catalyst, you are the one to initiate it."

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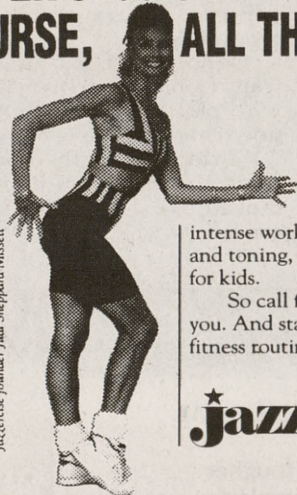


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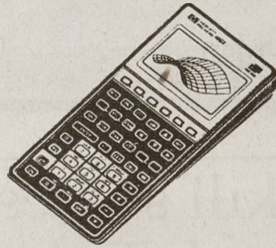
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