

'Right to lie' case goes to U.S. Supreme Court

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)—Police officers at a money-printing plant thought it was all in fun when they would call each other or supervisors, laugh into the phone, then hang up.

The prank lasted for months, until plant managers launched an investigation in October 1992 to determine who was involved. When police Sgt. Lester Erickson was asked, he professed ignorance. He was fired anyway.

The question of whether a government employee can be punished for denying wrongdoing has become a serious legal dispute. On Dec. 2, it will go before the U.S. Supreme Court, with Erickson's case cited as an example.

The latest ruling has gone in favor of the workers, most of whom had been fired. It was made by a Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, and has been appealed by the Office of Personnel Management.

Government officials say the decision impedes agencies' ability to investigate misconduct and discipline workers who lie about misconduct.

Not so, says Erickson's attorney, Paul Marth of Greensboro, N.C. "The Federal Circuit really does not condone a right to lie," he said, but the court does say a federal employee "has the right to deny misconduct."

Erickson, who now lives in North

Carolina, could not be reached to comment despite repeated efforts by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Marth said he has not talked to Erickson recently.

A spokesman for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which oversees the Western Currency Facility in north Fort Worth, referred questions about the investigation that snared Erickson to the solicitor general's office.

The Star-Telegram compiled a sketch of the mad laughter saga from documents in Erickson's case and a separate unfair labor practices complaint that other officers filed against the bureau.

Before the investigation, some officers had united to replace their government employees union with a unit of the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, or CLEAT.

Documents in the labor case argue that management retaliated against the four main union organizers by, among other things, changing shifts and giving some of them nonuniformed assignments.

Although Erickson was not among the four, he supported CLEAT efforts, according to a legal brief in the labor case.

In October 1992, he spent two months assigned to wash officers' cars, according to the brief, written by an attorney with the general counsel's office of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

ter five council members — France, Russia, China, Egypt and Kenya — abstained on a resolution last month threatening a travel ban.

Bush said Saddam is buying time to find ways to garner mass destruction weapons.

"I doubt it's weapons so much as it is research and hiding information from the inspectors as to how far they have gone in trying to obtain weapons of mass destruction, including chemical warfare and biological warfare," he said.

BUSH

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"I think he (Saddam Hussein) is testing the United Nations," Bush said. "When you're dealing with the possibility of producing weapons of mass destruction, it involves the whole world, and we better be strong and firm in making him comply with international law."

Iraq issued an order to expel American members of the United Nations inspection team Oct. 29 af-

CENTER

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Patterson Architects, the firm that designed the facility, anticipated possible expansion when they developed the layout of the facility.

Fred Patterson, the principal owner of Patterson Architects, said the center will occupy some 10,300 square feet and that could increase

in the future.

"We designed it with future expansion in mind," Patterson said. "We could add an additional module. We also have as an alternate a multi-purpose space that could be used."

Miller said that the child care center advisory committee is looking for possible subsidies to help fund the center and to provide additional grant money.

FLAWLESS

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The Baylor College of Medicine became a part of the A&M System in September 1996.

Dr. Leo Sayavedra, deputy chancellor for academic institutions and agencies of the A&M System, said the evaluation is a reflection of the caliber of the administration, faculty and students at the college.

"The Baylor College of Dentistry is a top dental school in the state and the country," he said. "The evaluation reinforces the fact that the A&M System is a quality system that expects its members

to meet high standards."

Hasegawa said the evaluation means the college is meeting a common standard for a dental health care institution.

"The Baylor College of Dentistry takes pride in quality patient care," he said. "The accreditation process helps the faculty know we are achieving that goal."

Cohen said he was impressed with the way the faculty worked together to achieve the successful accreditation.

"I haven't seen this level of cooperation in the five years that I have been here," Cohen said. "Everyone pulled together to achieve a common goal."

2 arrested in killing of quadruplets' mother

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Two men were arrested Monday on charges of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder in the shooting death of Sheila Bellush, the mother of quadruplet toddlers found slain in her Sarasota, Fla., home.

Texas Rangers arrested Samuel "Sammy" Gonzales, 27, and Daniel Alex Rocha, 29, both of San Antonio, said Mike Cox, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

"I would not say this was based on a tip," Cox said. "It was based on an investigation. The Rangers were working as long ago as last Wednesday, talking to people. ... They were known to us as possible suspects."

Rocha was arrested at his home and Gonzales at work, Cox said. Both arrests were made between noon and 1:30 p.m.

Both were being held in Bexar County Jail. No bond was set, nor was it known whether they would fight possible extradition.

Officers continued to hunt for suspected killer Jose Luis Del Toro, a 21-year-old from La Pryor in South Texas. He reportedly was last seen in the U.S.-Mexico border town of Piedras Negras.

"The DPS and other investigators are still relentlessly searching for Mr. Del Toro," Cox said. "The investigation is still focusing on Mexico." Cox said it was not immediately clear how Gonzales and Rocha were connected with Del Toro.

"I really can't speculate on that," Cox said. Sarasota County sheriff's officers visited San Antonio last week, initially to talk to Mrs. Bellush's ex-husband, Allen Blackthorne. They had divorced in 1988 and he gave up parental rights to his daughters, Stevie and 12-year-old Daryl, several months ago.

Police later changed their focus to Del Toro, who they believe went to Sarasota to kill Mrs. Bellush, then fled to Mexico. Florida authorities said Del Toro left his fingerprints on a clothes dryer in the house.

The motive is unclear, though Sarasota sheriff's officials suspect the killer had help in choosing Mrs. Bellush as the target and making his getaway.

Del Toro was sentenced Sept. 10 in Travis County to 30 days in jail for misdemeanor theft. He was permitted to serve the sentence on weekends.

He reported to jail Oct. 31 and was released Nov. 2, five days before Mrs. Bellush was killed. The weekend of the slaying, he had said his aunt died in California and he wanted to go to the funeral, according to Travis County sheriff's spokesman Curtis Weeks.

A car Del Toro is believed to have driven nearly 1,000 miles from Texas to Florida was recovered in Austin. Inside were a .45-caliber handgun and directions to Mrs. Bellush's street written out by an unwitting clerk at a nearby gas station, authorities said.

Sarasota sheriff's Lt. Bill Stookey said Mrs. Bellush apparently was last seen alive Nov. 7 when her husband, James Bellush, went to work and her 13-year-old daughter Stevie went to school.

Stevie came home and found her lying in blood in the kitchen of their rented home. The 35-year-old woman's four 23-month-old toddlers — Frankie, Timothy, Joseph and Courtney — were wearing life jackets and were unharmed, crawling around her body, authorities said.

Last Thursday, James Bellush adopted his wife's two older daughters. He and the six children will be moving to New Jersey to be near his family.

"I never thought I was going to bury my wife at age 35," he told mourners at a packed memorial service.

Bellush, a 35-year-old representative for Pfizer Pharmaceutical, met his wife in August 1992. They were married on April 23, 1993, in San Antonio.

The couple moved to Florida in September, shortly after felony assault charges were filed against Mrs. Bellush. The charges stemmed from allegations made by Stevie that she had beaten her with a belt, raising welts on her legs.

Child Protective Services caseworkers investigated and later dropped the state's efforts to take temporary custody of the girl.

SAFETY

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Shaun Travers, a coordinator of student judicial services in the Department of Student Life, said hearings, such as the ones by the student judicial services have, are different from trials because they focus on the development of a student's character and education.

He said if media representatives were present at the hearings, the environment of the proceedings would change.

"Our hearings are a one-on-one conversation between me and a student with a few witnesses in the room," Travers said. "If the media is there, students may not talk about why he or she chose to drink such as a fight with parents, girlfriend or

boyfriend or a problem with their grades. My goal is for the person to learn something. I want that opportunity to help you grow."

Carter said closed hearings make people wonder if they are fair.

Travers said that although A&M hearings are closed to the public, anyone can get statistics on the number of hearings by the violation of policy from the Department of Student Life.

Kim Novak, coordinator of student judicial services in the Department of Student Life, said that A&M should combat crime in a way that promotes cooperation among departments.

"Student judicial services, student affairs or UPD cannot fight crime on this campus alone," she said. "This (the fight) has to be involved in every aspect of campus life."

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