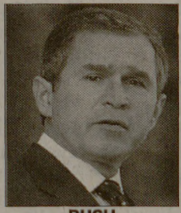


Bush aide questioned Barnes help

DALLAS (AP) — Six months before Gov. George W. Bush announced for president, top aides were dealing with the thorny issue of whether Lt. Gov. Ben Barnes helped Bush into the Texas National Guard during the height of the Vietnam War. The *Dallas Morning News* reported yesterday that longtime Bush friend and chief fund-raiser Donald L. Evans went to Barnes in September of 1998 after an anonymous letter alleged that Bush's father, then a Houston congressman, had solicited Barnes' assistance with the Guard during an encounter at the Bluebonnet Bowl football game in Houston. The allegation renewed the nagging question of whether Bush got special treatment landing a spot as a sideside fighter pilot during the Vietnam War.



BUSH

Evans said Barnes told him that he did not remember whether he had helped Bush get a Guard slot, and said nobody in the Bush family, including his father, had asked for such help. Barnes did say, however, that a Houston businessman had approached him and asked him to intervene for Bush, Evans said. "I don't remember Ben mentioning a specific name," Evans said. "I just remember that he said, 'There was a businessman in Houston, that mentioned that Bush's desire to enter the Guard to me.'"

Evans said he met with Barnes on his own initiative, without informing the governor in advance. At the time, he was Bush's gubernatorial campaign chair.

Evans said he told the governor that Barnes confirmed that no Bush family members had sought his help.

But, he said, he did not mention the part about the Houston businessman because it seemed too vague.

In return, the governor — who says he knows of no special help he received getting into the Guard — jotted a note to Barnes, thanking him for affirming he and his father's recollection of events.

"Thank you for your candor and for killing the rumor about you and Dad ever discussing my status. Like you, he never remembers any conversation," Bush wrote in the memo, dated Sept. 9, 1998.

"I appreciate your help," the Republican governor wrote to the longtime Democrat.

Barnes' testimony is scheduled to be taken Monday at an Austin law office by lawyers for former Texas Lottery Executive Director Lawrence Littwin. Littwin has sued GTECH Corp., the lottery operator, alleging that the company is to blame for his firing in 1997, after four months on the job.

According to court records, Littwin's lawyers want to question Barnes, a former GTECH lobbyist, about whether GTECH was allowed to keep its lucrative state contract in exchange for Barnes' silence about the Guard matter.

Rig capsizes, hunt continues for crewman

PORT ARANSAS (AP) — The hunt continued yesterday for a missing crewman from a 122-foot drilling rig that capsized early Saturday in the Gulf of Mexico.

Eleven of the 12 crewmen aboard the jack-up rig DL-Hanson were rescued after it collapsed about 1:30 a.m.

One of its four legs gave way in 150-180 feet of water about 30 miles northeast of Aransas Pass, the Coast Guard said.

Jack-up rigs are platforms used for drilling oil and for other sub-surface exploration.

They can be floated into place and jacked up on retractable legs to the proper height.

Two die in experimental plane crash

CONROE (AP) — Two men who died when a wing broke off their experimental plane as they were flying over Montgomery County Airport have been identified.

Gordon Eugene Brown, 52, of The Woodlands, and Rudolph Aguilar, 47, of Conroe, died on impact, Conroe police Lt. Russell Reynolds said.

The men were about 1,000 feet over the airport tarmac when the home-built, single-engine Skywalker Revelation lost its left wing (about 5:30 p.m. Saturday), Reynolds said.

"The wing just separated," Tim Teaf, one of several witnesses, said. "It snap-rolled, spun three times and crashed."

CPS efforts faulted as lax in toddler's death

DALLAS (AP) — An internal review has found that the state agency charged with safeguarding children erred in the case of a toddler who allegedly died at the hands of his parents, *The Dallas Morning News* reported in a copyright story.

Jabriel Walder, 3, died Oct. 12 1998 of internal injuries from blunt force blows that severed his pancreas.

His death was ruled a homicide by medical examiners, who recorded 56 scars on the 25-pound boy's body.

The boy's parents, Karen Walder, 35, and Gary Isaac, 38, have been charged with injury to a child for Jabriel's death and are awaiting trial. Each denies beating the boy.

Doctors, nurses, child-care workers and police all reported possible abuse. But Child Protective Services (CPS) did not act decisively on the warnings, including a doctor's notations that "non-accidental scars" were present on Jabriel and his twin brother, Nagee, the newspaper reported yesterday.

Also ignored was one of the agency's own caseworker's pleas that the Walder children be taken immediately into protective custody.

"Available information was ignored, leading to poor decision-making, which left these children at

high risk of abuse," according to an internal review by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, CPS's parent agency.

Parts of the review — heavily censored — were released to *The Dallas Morning News* through the state's Open Records Act.

Officials say the case offers a rare glimpse inside a CPS agency shrouded in confidentiality, beset by high employee turnover and low pay and hindered by bureaucratic slowness.

The review blamed faulty supervision in investigative and family preservation units, incomplete record-keeping and bureaucratic delays that weakened the system's ability to adequately monitor the Walder family.

"A lot of risk factors were missed," Joyce James, an administrator in another CPS office who served on the review team, said.

As a result of the Walder case, at least three staff members in the Dallas agency have been fired or chose to resign, and the state has already instituted reforms to increase CPS supervision and caseworker training.

Also, in Dallas, special CPS "risk units" now evaluate serious cases involving physical abuse and neglect of children ages 4 and younger.

"... leading to poor decision-making which left children at high risk."

—internal review by Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

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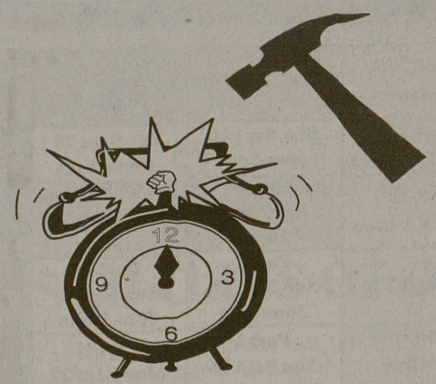
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