

San Antonio millionaire goes on trial for 1997 Florida murder

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — More than two-and-a-half years after the mother of quadruplets was shot and stabbed in her Florida home, her ex-husband, a San Antonio millionaire, goes on trial Monday, accused of arranging her murder.

Allen Blackthorne has a wealth of financial resources at his disposal, as well as a legal team that started prepping for this trial two years before he was even indicted. His trial is expected to last three to five weeks.

A two-count federal indictment charges Blackthorne with interstate conspiracy to commit murder for hire, which carries a mandatory life sentence, and interstate domestic violence.

Blackthorne's ex-wife, Sheila Bellush, was shot and stabbed in her Sarasota, Fla., home in November 1997, shortly after she moved from the San Antonio area. Her 2-year-old quadruplets from her second marriage were found wandering in blood near their mother's body.

Blackthorne was indicted by a federal grand jury in January. A day later, a Bexar County grand jury returned state charges. The federal case is the first to go to trial.

"He is innocent, not just 'not

guilty' innocent," said Richard Lubin, the West Palm Beach, Fla., lawyer who defended famed defense attorney F. Lee Bailey before representing Blackthorne.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney John

"He is innocent, not just 'not guilty' innocent."

— Richard Lubin
defense attorney

Murphy said prosecutors won't "shock anyone with any of our evidence."

One suspect in the case, Samuel Gonzales, has already pleaded guilty to solicitation of capital murder.

Gonzales' cousin and the alleged triggerman, Jose Luis Del Toro, escaped into Mexico but was returned by Mexican authorities last year. He faces trial next month in Florida.

Gonzales testified against his friend, Daniel Rocha, an accomplished amateur golfer, who was sentenced to life in prison last year.

Gonzales claimed Rocha told him

the money for the murder, like the plan, came from Rocha's frequent golf and gambling partner, Blackthorne.

Legal experts told the *San Antonio Express-News* that Blackthorne's best bet is to focus on Rocha, who has been inconsistent with his statements about the case.

In an August 1998 letter to the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Rocha wrote while awaiting trial in Florida that the plan had been to scare Bellush and not murder her.

A few months later, in January 1999, Rocha failed a polygraph test in which he answered yes when asked if Blackthorne recommended killing Bellush.

Blackthorne, who turns 45 Monday, has denied any part in the killing. He has said authorities have overlooked a likely suspect in his ex-wife's second husband, James Bellush.

Accusing James Bellush, an apparent victim, of being a villain poses other risks because the widower has become sole guardian for at least one teen-age daughter born to Blackthorne, as well as his own quadruplets, said St. Mary's University law professor Michael Ariens.

Two indicted in alleged kickback scheme

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Authorities say more charges are expected after a grand jury last week indicted two former Socorro school system vendors, accusing them of participating in a kickback scheme that beat the school district out of \$4.6 million.

Michael Christopher Rhinehardt, 32, and Toya Michelle Pinkston, 26, both from the Dallas area, were indicted Tuesday and charged with theft over \$200,000 and misapplication of fiduciary property, the *El Paso Times* reported.

The charges are first-degree felonies and punishable by up to life in prison.

Pinkston was arrested Thursday and placed in the Dallas County Jail. She was released Friday after posting \$100,000 bond, officials said.

Rhinehardt was still at large.

The indictments are the latest development in an investigation by the El Paso County Sheriff's Department said Capt. Ralph Mitchell. He said more arrests and indictments are expected.

On April 4, the former director of risk management for the Socorro Independent School District in El Paso, Mexico, was arrested on similar charges. He remained at the El Paso County Jail Annex in lieu of a \$1 million bond.

Mitchell said Rhinehardt operated a private investigation business in Dallas that allegedly billed the Socorro school district for background checks on district employees that not performed. Pinkston was his administrative assistant. Pinkston was suspended from his job last year while officials looked into irregularities in the school district's funds. He later resigned.

TIPS

Continued from Page 1

Kretzschman also said, that even though College Station is not a large city, students should still take the necessary steps to protect their belongings. Students living in residence halls should pay close attention to who is coming into the dorm behind them. Students living on campus should question anyone they do not recognize entering the dorm; if visiting, students should escort them to the room.

Kretzschman said, students should use care at night when going to bed.

"Students need to lock their doors, they should remember that at anytime anyone in the dorm can enter

their room," Kretzschman said.

Apartment and dorms are not the only targets for thieves, cars are often burglarized in the summer as well.

When junior English major Aaron Teague's car was stolen he lost \$2000 worth of property and his insurance only gave him \$800. His insurance did not cover the cellular phone, compact discs, or books he kept in his car. Teague's experience changed the way he viewed the world around him.

"First I was mad, and then I felt unsafe, I lost my sense of security," Teague said.

The College Station Police Department has shifted its focus to areas with a high occurrence of car theft. Major Mike Patterson of CSPD said, the area around Northgate is prone to car burglary.

"Car thieves know that ladies will leave their purses in cars while at the bar," Patterson said.

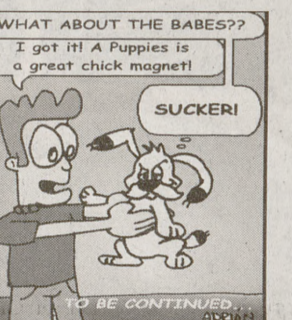
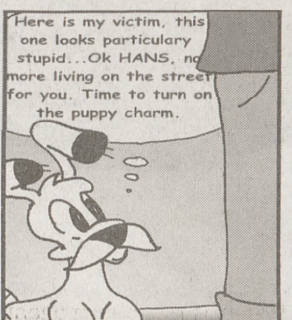
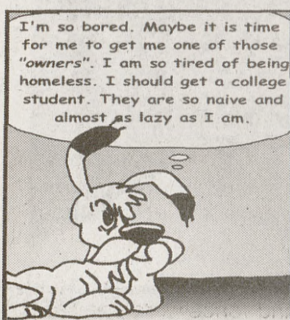
Patterson also said, people can avoid being a victim if they take an active role in protecting their property. Patterson said car owners should not leave anything of value such as purses, checkbooks or portable compact disk players in open view inside the car. Car owners should make sure all doors are locked and windows are secure before leaving the car. Patterson said, if someone must leave their purse or valuables in the car, they should lock them in the trunk.

"People should remember, in a few minutes it takes to secure their car can save lots of trouble later," Patterson said.

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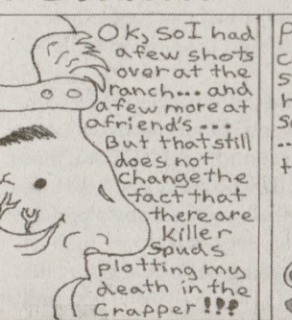
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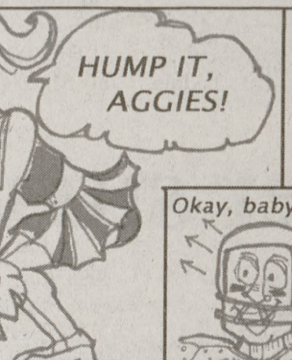
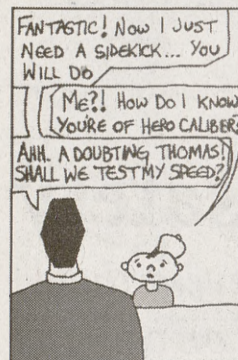


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Led by eight Texas A&M men's basketball players' NCAA tournament through June 5 at Stanford University while conference of Texas finished All-American Javelin earned the title for 38th place university's women's A&M coach would finish in the top of the team. "Overall, I think we were hoping it's been a great year for us, had coming in." Sophomores two runners who Big 12 Champion posted the eighth to earn All-American in two even with a time of 2 mile relay. The 400-meter and seniors John (alternate) v. Saturday night be

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