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Fun fish



Ricky Wood, senior yell leader and a theater arts major, presents a live fish to Janice and Timothy Kerlee Sr. in honor of their Fish Camp namesake presentation. Wood will be one of the co-chairs for Camp Kerlee in Summer 2001.

Six escape from Alabama prison

ST. CLAIR SPRINGS, Ala. (AP) — Six convicts, including three murderers, escaped from a maximum-security prison by using a broom handle to slip under a 5,000-volt electric fence.

Officers set up roadblocks and went house to house with tracking dogs Wednesday in a search for the men. Three of them were serving life sentences without parole, and a fourth had broken out of the prison before.

The men escaped from the St. Clair Correctional Facility after dark Tuesday. They got past a series of three fences: A 12-foot interior chain-link fence topped with razor wire, an electrified fence and another razor-topped fence, said prison spokesman John Hamm.

They used a piece of wood — apparently a broom handle — to lift the electric fence so they could slide under it and then slipped under the exterior fence, said Prison Commissioner Mike Haley. He said it was not clear how they got past the first fence.

"An alarm that is supposed to go off

automatically if anyone tampers with the electric fence did not sound, Haley said. Officials were not sure why. "They escaped very near a guard tower, but there was no one in it because we were trying to depend more on technology. Our technology failed," he said.

Corrections officials have described the prison as severely understaffed. The electric fence was installed about five years ago as a backup.

The men also got past a guard driving around the outside of the fence. Haley said it takes that guard several minutes to circle the prison, time enough for someone to flee after watching him pass.

The prison has 1,301 inmates and 188 guards, about 65 fewer than officials said are needed.

The men were discovered missing during an 8 p.m. head count but could have escaped as early as 5:30 p.m., giving them a head start on searchers, Haley said. Authorities were unsure whether the fugitives were armed. No prison weapons were missing.

The six may have fled dense, hilly forest that surrounds the prison, about 20 miles north of Birmingham.

"We don't know if there was anyone waiting for them," Haley said. Dogs picked up their scent, but footprints and track, but we were unable to locate them."

One of the inmates, Steve Murphy, who is serving a life sentence for murder, broke out in the early 1990s in the only previous escape from the prison, Hamm said.

Besides Murphy, 45, the men were identified as O.C. Borden and Gary Scott, 31, both serving without parole for murder; Alfred, 43, serving life without parole for robbery; Billy Gamble, 24, serving 25 years for robbery; and John McClain, 35, serving 20 years for burglary.

Some in St. Clair Springs said they were not notified of the break out, as prison officials had promised. Haley said calls were supposed to be made to a list of area residents, but was unsure whether that was

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