

Scaling the wall



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Aaron Bryant, a sophomore aerospace engineering major and member of the Navy ROTC program, rappels down the 50 foot wall of the rappelling tower at Brayton Fire Training Field.

Agents search home of White House gunman

EVANSVILLE, Ind. (AP) — Secret Service agents removed computer equipment and several bags of other evidence Wednesday from the home of a man shot outside the White House gates after brandishing a handgun.

Before entering the residence of Robert W. Pickett, 47, officers from the Evansville police bomb squad joined Secret Service agents in scouting outside for booby traps or bombs.

Four hours later, government agents wearing latex gloves carried out computer equipment, including a monitor and hard drive, a box overflowing with computer cords and five brown grocery bags. Police removed yellow crime scene tape, saying the search of Pickett's home was complete.

Included in the evidence were "volumes of papers," that will need to be combed through, said police Detective Alan Brack.

No firearms were found, Brack said.

The search warrant obtained by the Secret Service said agents were looking for computer equipment that might contain letters to President Bush, Rep. John Hostettler, R-Ind., or other government agencies or officials, according to Capt. Bill Welcher of the Evansville police.

The warrant also said agents were looking for firearms and for magazines that might indicate whether Pickett was a member of a militia group.

Secret Service agent Jim Dennis said in the search warrant that Hostettler aides indicated that Pickett

sent letters to the congressman's offices in Indiana and Washington in the past year about grievances Pickett had with the Internal Revenue Service, which fired him in 1987.

The aides also told the Secret Service that Pickett had gone to Hostettler's office, the search warrant said.

Capitol police have asked Hostettler and his office not to talk about any contract they may have with Pickett, spokesman Michael Jahr said.

Pickett was shot in the right knee by officers outside the White House gates shortly before noon Wednesday. He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he underwent knee surgery. He also was to undergo psychological evaluation.

He was in serious condition.

Teen apologizes for slaying

PALATKA, Fla. (AP) — Jurors in the first-degree murder trial of a 15-year-old heard him on tape Wednesday, apologizing for what happened to a 12-year-old playmate police had found strangled.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this to happen," a sobbing John Silva said during questioning by authorities.

In the rambling 3 1/2-hour statement, Silva first said he and Jerry Lee Alley were wrestling when the younger boy hit his head and began bleeding.

"I panicked, I did not know what to do," Silva said. Silva denied knowledge of his playmate being tied up, but later said: "I tied his hands so he wouldn't hurt himself."

A medical examiner testified that the boy was strangled by an Ace bandage and an electrical cord. His hands and feet were bound behind his back by another bandage.

Early on the tape, Silva said he did not plan the killing.

However, police said a note found at the scene allegedly written by Silva included such lines as "tie up hands," "gag," and "cover eyes."

— John Silva defendant

Jerry failed to return home for supper May 26. His body was found three days later inside a dried-up septic tank used by area children as a fort.

Silva is being tried as an adult. He could face life in prison without parole if convicted.

"I panicked, I did not know what to do."

Police require reporters' fingerprints at trial

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Reporters covering the upcoming state trial of convicted Yosemite Park killer Cary Stayner are being required to undergo fingerprint checks by authorities concerned about security.

The measure has surprised editors, news directors and First Amendment experts.

"This is the first thing I've heard about it," said Charlie Waters, executive editor of the *Fresno Bee*. "This is absurd."

Waters said Thursday he would have fought the measure had he known of it. He was bit immediately sure if his reporters had submitted to the criminal background check.

Stayner is already serving a federal life sen-

tence for beheading a Yosemite naturalist in 1999. A date for his state trial in the slayings of three park tourists later that year has not been set.

Officials handling the background checks said they are worried about security at the tiny Mari-

"This is absurd."

— Charlie Waters executive editor of *Fresno Bee*

posa County courthouse. Superior Court Executive Officer Michael Berest said he thought he was

following the procedure used to issue press credentials in the federal case.

But Carol Davis, a federal courts official in Sacramento, said reporters only had to submit two photos and show their credentials to get a pass for the case.

Berest said anyone with photo identification from the federal case does not have to undergo the background check. But most of the approximately 70 reporters requesting credentials needed the fingerprint analysis and only one organization, The Associated Press, had objected, he said.

So far, the checks have not unearthed any criminal activity, said Lt. Brian Muller, spokesman for the sheriff. If they do, law enforcement officials will discuss whether the reporter can cover the trial.

News in Brief

Prisoners: escape from jail was easy

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Three of six prisoners recaptured after breaking out of an Alabama maximum-security prison said Thursday the escape was easy — and freedom was worth it.

"I just had to be free for a change," said Jack Allred, a convicted robber serving a life sentence. "It was great. I'd do it all again."

Allred was among the six fugitives caught last week in Buck-

snort, Tenn., two days after they broke out of the St. Clair Correctional Facility northeast of Birmingham.

Allred, James McClain and Steve Murphy granted brief interviews to reporters Thursday against their attorneys' advice. Billy Gamble, O.C. Borden and Gary Ray Scott declined.

Murphy said the highlight of his freedom was eating a bologna sandwich from a Bucksnot convenience store.

"Those people should be on the map because they make one of the best," he said.

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