

Kmart closes Texas stores

By Alexandra R. Moses
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kmart Corp. will close 54 stores in Texas and 326 stores nationwide as it works to emerge from bankruptcy by April 30, the discount retailer said Tuesday.

Kmart said it also would close a distribution center in Corsicana, about 50 miles south of Dallas, and put about 550 people out of work, the Corsicana Daily Sun reported on its Web site.

Kmart said it would shed 30,000 to 35,000 jobs nationwide, but it did not provide an estimate of the number of employees losing their jobs in Texas.

Eight of the stores to be closed are in Houston and several others are nearby. Thirteen targeted stores are spread across the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and five more are in San Antonio.

Chief executive James Adamson said the company plans to emerge from bankruptcy by April 30.

The Troy-based retailer, which filed for Chapter 11 protection nearly a year ago, currently operates roughly 1,830 stores.

The store closings, which involve 44 states and Puerto Rico, are subject to court approval. Kmart is scheduled to appear in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Chicago on Jan. 28.

Tuesday's announcement marks the second round of closings in less than a year. Last March, Kmart closed 283 stores, affecting 22,000 jobs. Analysts predicted this spate of closings would be 300 to 600 stores.

"We're all upset. I've been here since 1998. I helped build this store up," said Sharon Knight, an employee at a Detroit Kmart who learned Tuesday morning that her store is one of those closing. "It's kind of a tremendous loss to me."

Knight, who works behind the jewelry counter, said employees were told at a meeting that the store is planning to close within 60 to 70 days.

Kmart filed for bankruptcy nearly a year ago after a stock dive and disappointing 2001 holiday sales. Kmart is scheduled to appear in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Chicago on Jan. 28 to address the store closings.

Kmart needs to close stores while under bankruptcy protection to allow it to get out of leases.

Burt Flickinger, a retail analyst with Reach Marketing, says while store closings are necessary, the company isn't going about it the right way.

Kmart is basing its closures on performance over the last year "and should be looking at what the business will look like the next 12 months," Flickinger says.

Since Kmart filed for bankruptcy on Jan. 22, 2002, it has lost an additional \$2 billion and faces declines in same-store sales, sales at stores open at least a year.

"As the company contracts, there's still no sign that it can make any money," Flickinger says. "There's so much uncertainty in what Kmart can do to solve its problems."

Jordan Kaplan, a professor of managerial science at Long Island University, said the store

More closings and layoffs for Kmart

As part of a plan to get out of bankruptcy by the end of April, Kmart Corp. will close 326 more stores and eliminate 30,000 to 35,000 more jobs.

Largest corporate layoff announcements

General Motors Corp.	December 1991	74,000
Sears, Roebuck and Co.	January 1993	50,000
AT&T Corp.	January 1996	40,000
Kmart Corp.	January 2003	37,000
Ford Motor Co.	January 2002	35,000

SOURCE: Associated Press AP
Closings may buy time for Kmart.

"Hopefully, it will stave off a complete liquidation of Kmart — which of course is always a possibility," Kaplan said.

Kmart has struggled to compete with discount rivals Wal-Mart and Target. Some analysts have suggested there isn't room for Kmart unless it finds some way of distinguishing itself and luring customers.

Other troubles plague the company beyond its business plan. Just before its bankruptcy filing, Kmart began receiving anonymous letters, purporting to be from employees, that suggested wrongdoing at the company.

The letters spawned an investigation into the way the company was run.

Texas executes first convict of 2003

By Pam Easton
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Convicted killer Samuel Gallamore, who brutally beat and stabbed to death a partially paralyzed woman, her husband and daughter, was executed Tuesday night in Huntsville, Tx.

"I would like to apologize and say I'm sorry but words seem so hollow and cheap," Gallamore said in a handwritten statement distributed after his execution. He had declined to make a final statement from the death chamber gurney. Their death should not have happened, but it did. I'm so sorry that all of this took place."

Gallamore also said that in the last hour of his life, his heart grew because relatives of the slain victims said they forgave him.

Gallamore was pronounced dead at 6:14 p.m., seven minutes after the lethal drugs began to flow.

The niece of the slain couple, Kristin Huffman, attended the execution along with Kerr County Sheriff Rusty Hierholzer. Huffman wiped tears from her eyes after Gallamore took his final breath.

"There's sadness that they were killed in a horrific way, yet I think my heart just goes out now to Gallamore's family," Huffman said. "Now they are grieving over the loss of their son and we know

what that feels like."

Gallamore had said last week from death row that the 1992 slayings didn't have to happen.

Gallamore was the first to be executed in Texas this year. Six others are also set to die in January, including John Baltazar, whose execution is scheduled Wednesday night for the 1997 shooting death of a 5-year-old Corpus Christi girl.

Last year, Texas executed 33 people. Gallamore was the 290th person executed since Texas reinstated the death penalty in 1982. The U.S. Supreme Court denied a request for a stay Tuesday.

Gallamore said his friend James John Steiner directed him on March 29, 1992, to the rural Kerr County home where the pair planned a robbery for drug money. Julianna Kenney and her husband, Verle Clayton Kenney, lived there with Julianna Kenney's daughter, Adrienne Arnot.

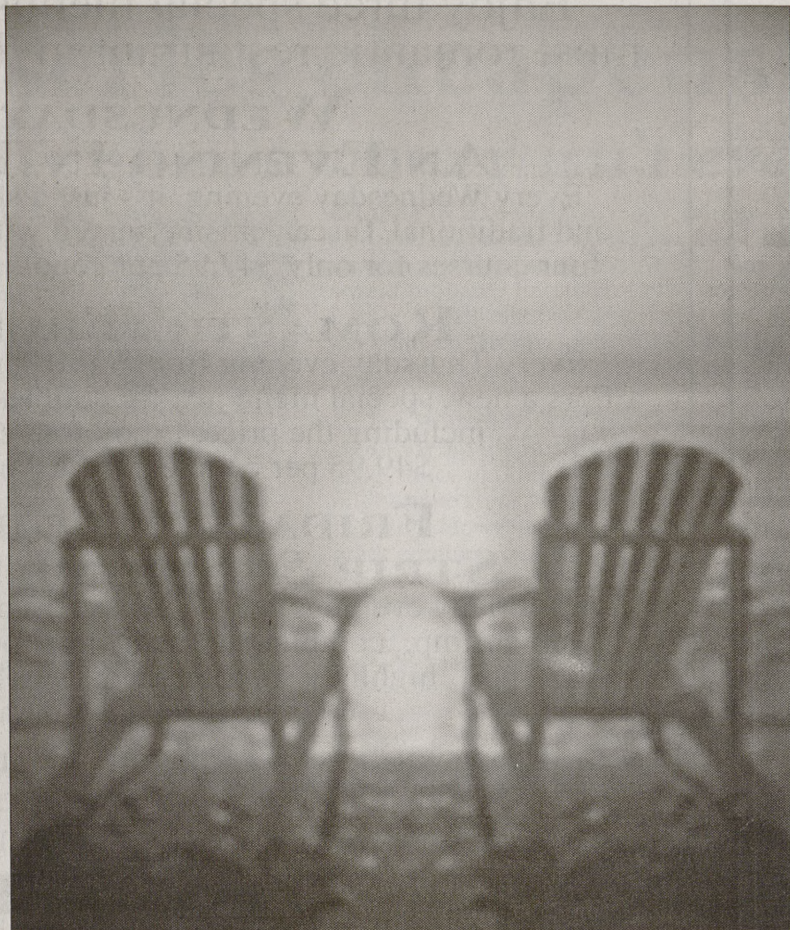
Gallamore and Steiner, who had cared for Julianna Kenney in her home, beat the paralyzed woman's husband and her daughter. Arnot was struck 12 times in the head and face and suffered 14 blows to her upper body, back and right thigh. Kenney was hit six times in the head with a tire iron and a cedar stick.

Gallamore then grabbed a knife from the kitchen and stabbed Arnot and Kenney.

"Now they are grieving over the loss of their son and we know what that feels like."

— Kristin Huffman
victims' niece

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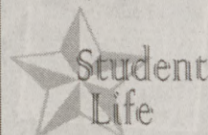
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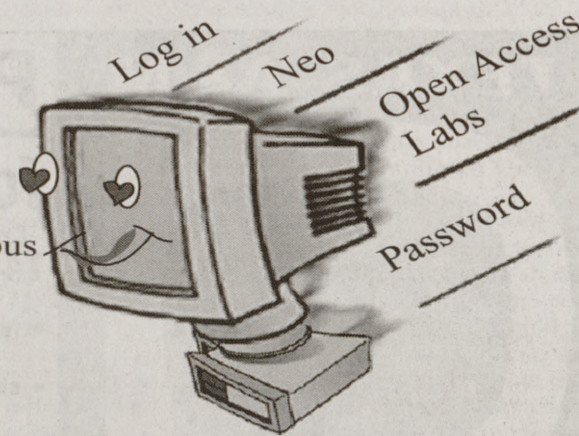
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- Jan 15, 10:00 - 1:00 Blocker
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- Jan 16, 9:00 - 12:00 SCC
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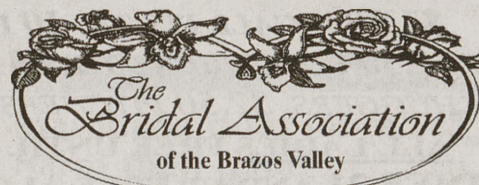
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