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10A

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Carbon monoxide kills three teens in cave along river

By Patrick Howe
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A labyrinth of caves left by 1800s sandstone miners along the Mississippi River has long been a forbidden and sometimes deadly thrill for teenagers, who ignore the keep-out signs and thwart the city's best efforts to seal off the passages.

On Tuesday, the caves again proved lethal: Three teens died, apparently of carbon monoxide poisoning, perhaps from a fire smoldering inside the caverns.

Killed were Nicholas Lee Larson, Natalie Lorraine Vanvorst and Patrick Gerard Dague, all 17. A 17-year-old boy was rescued, and his condition was upgraded Wednesday from critical to serious. A fourth boy escaped and alerted authorities.

Fire Chief Douglas Holton said the teens entered through a small opening, about 3 by 5 feet. Once inside, they could stand up, he said. The dead were found about 600 feet in.

At least five other people have died in the caves in the past two decades.

The passages stretch for miles along the river and are known as the Wabasha Street caves. A brewery once dug some of the caverns to create earthen warehouses, and a mushroom-growing operation flourished in the moist, dark caves for

Deadly city caves

Authorities sealed an entrance to the Wabasha Street caves complex in St. Paul, Minn., after three teens died of carbon monoxide poisoning Tuesday.



decades. The caves even had a nightclub in the 1930s, Castle Royal, and hosted big-name entertainers who frequented the spot.

Over the years, the city tried to keep people out by putting up warning signs, boarding up openings with plywood and dumping thousands of feet of construction debris from buildings in the passages.

But people shimmy through the openings or chip away at the soft sandstone at the

Softball

Continued from page 7A

Texas had three hits but was unable to put up any runs. In the bottom of the fifth inning, Aggie junior outfielder James hit a walk-off, three-run home run to put the Aggies ahead on eight runs after five innings and ended the game on the run rule.

"We got it done," James said. "We had just heard the University of Nebraska got beat, we were up 8-1, and we needed one more run. We haven't beaten Texas, so it was good to come out with the win."

A&M head coach Jo Evans said James relishes being in that position. "(James) is great in the clutch, (no comment) with runners on base."

However Evans said she is really pleased with how well girls hit the ball all the way through the order. "There's a real hero on this team; they're all heroes," Evans said.

The action continues this weekend as the Aggies head to Lincoln, Neb., to face The University of Nebraska.

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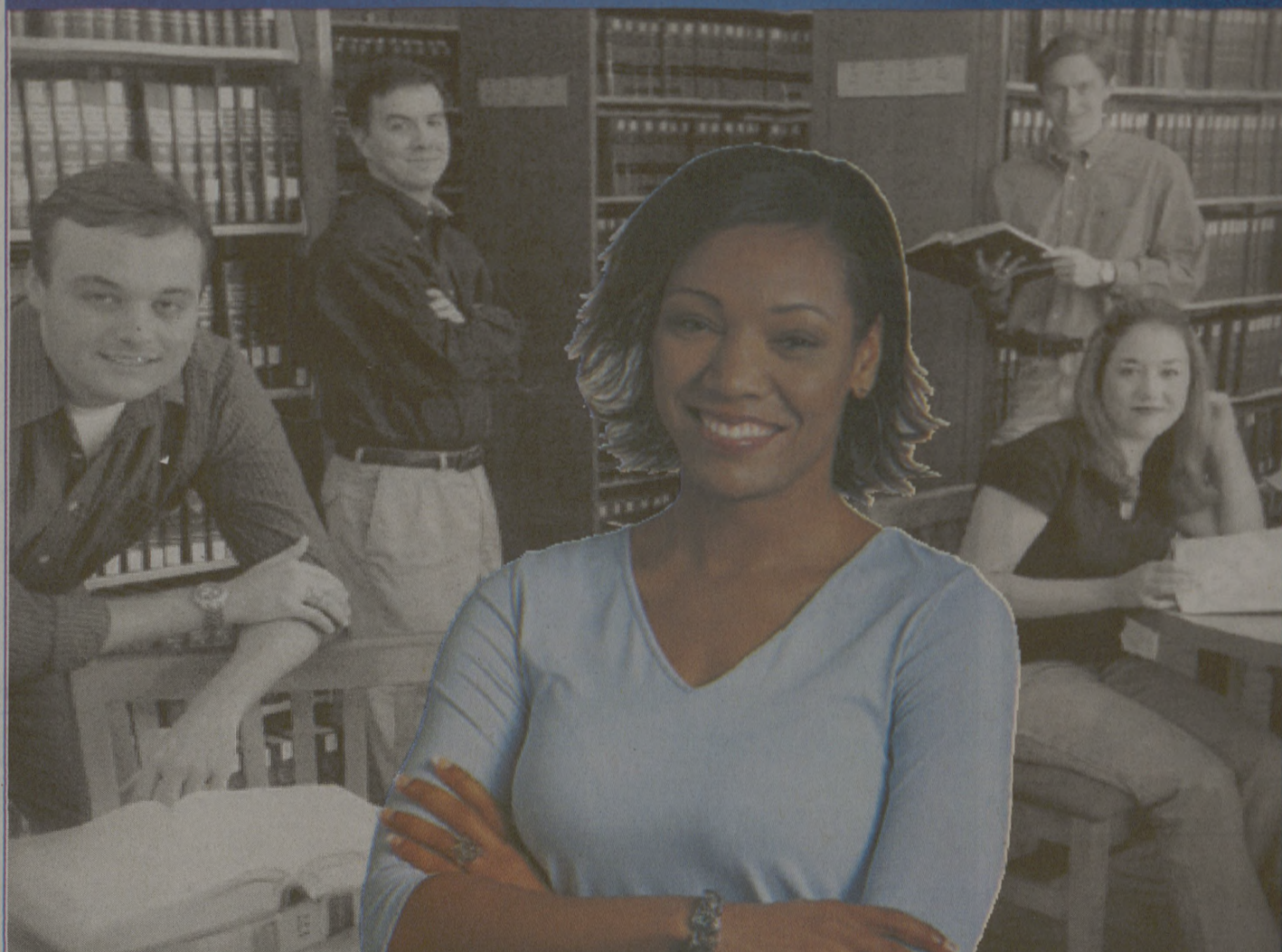
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