

Man freed from Death Row returns home

By BATHOLOMEW SULLIVAN
 WEST PALM BEACH — A man released Wednesday from Florida's Death Row by order of the state Supreme Court said he has returned home to "a madhouse" and repeated his 13-year claim that he was falsely accused of murder.

Bradley P. Scott, 46, a former landscaper with a lengthy criminal record, was convicted and sent to Death Row in 1986 for setting a 12-year-old Punta Gorda girl on fire in 1973.

In a madhouse surveillance Thursday, he declined to talk about the case or the advice of his lawyer.

"It feels great to be home, but I should never have been gone," he said.

The Supreme Court ordered a Charlotte County circuit judge to overturn Scott's murder conviction and vacate his death sentence in May, saying Scott was incapable of premeditation, a defense after prosecutors waited more than seven years to charge him with the crime.

He returned home Wednesday night to his wife, April, and his two children — one born two days before his arrest.

Police extinguished a brush fire in Punta Gorda hours after 19-year-old Linda Pflanz disappeared in October 1973 and found a charred body a medical examiner determined had been doused with gasoline and set afire.

The girl had died of acute smoke inhalation, leading investigators to believe she was alive when she was set on fire, Scott was considered a suspect because a witness testified he was with the girl that night.

But Scott had an alibi. He said a girlfriend had gone to a Sarasota shopping mall and bought a model kit, and the store's sales records would prove it.

Paul Pflanz, the father of the murdered girl, said Thursday he believes Scott is a danger to the community.

Pflanz said "all of Southeast Florida is very upset — nobody here understands it." He is organizing an effort to make the names of the "liberal bleeding hearts" on the Supreme Court known so that they can be voted out of office, he said. Their May 30 ruling was unanimous.

One month after the murder, Scott was charged with the attempted rape of a 15-year-old Fort Charlotte girl. He was convicted of battery and sentenced to a year in jail.

The former Lake Worth resident resented in Palm Beach County in 1975.

During the 1980s, he was arrested at least 11 times and was convicted of drunken driving, soliciting a prostitute and stealing a plant.

Bradley P. Scott

IN BRIEF

5 Fort Pierce burglary suspects caught
 FORT PIERCE — More than \$100,000 in stolen property has been recovered, and five of six men suspected in a series of burglaries have been arrested.

Four stolen vehicles and several television sets, microwave ovens, videocassette recorders and other items have been recovered in the three-month investigation, which culminated with the arrests of five Fort Pierce men in the past two weeks.

Lucie County sheriff's spokesman Mark Weisberg said the men worked together in groups of two to six members and burglarized homes, stole cars and money at gunpoint across the county.

Just a dozen of the crimes were in Fort St. Lucie, Weisberg said. Most of the stolen merchandise has been returned to the owners, and detectives are searching for the sixth suspect, Weisberg said.

Three arrested were John Fitzgerald Robinson, 26, of 4109 Sloan Road, charged with robbery with a firearm, auto theft and aggravated assault; Tyrone Robinson, 28, of 218 N. 41st St., charged with two counts each of auto theft, burglary and grand theft; and Richard Smith, 29, of 706 N. 29th St., charged with two counts each of auto theft, burglary and grand theft.

Two men are in custody in Wheeler County, Ga., on auto theft charges and are awaiting extradition to St. Lucie County for face charges, Weisberg said. They are Aaron Grimes, 30, of 809 N. 2nd St.; and Michael Parker, 23, of 2010 Ave. G.

The sixth suspect, Stanley Beale, 29, of 2402 Barcelona Ave., remains at large.

St. Lucie schools to hold orientation
 Fort St. Lucie and Fort Pierce Central high schools will hold orientations next week for incoming ninth-graders, other first-time students and their parents.

Fort St. Lucie High School, 120 S.E. Lemard Road, will have an open house Thursday from 8:30 to 9 p.m. Students must pick up class schedules during an orientation in the gymnasium and tour the school.

On Wednesday, an orientation will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the gymnasium of Fort Pierce Central at 1101 Edwards Road. Students and parents will hear about the school's curriculum and activities and meet teachers and administrators. Students must receive class schedules until they report to their homeroom Aug. 19, the first day of school.

An open house scheduled Aug. 14 at Lanwood Elementary School has been postponed until 7 p.m. Sept. 10.

Port Mayaca Locks to close 3 months
 PORT MAYACA — The Port Mayaca Locks, just east of Lake Okechobee, will be closed for three months beginning Monday for maintenance by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The locks are part of the Okechobee Waterway, which stretches from the St. Lucie River through Lake Okechobee to the west coast of Florida.

Boaters through Nov. 3 will have to use other routes.

"Unfortunately, the only thing they can do is go around the state," said Patricia Haines, a civil engineer with the Corps. "We have to stop up on our maintenance so we don't have any emergencies."

Boaters will replace rubber seals and other parts as well as giving the locks a fresh coat of paint. It has been about five years since the locks were closed, Haines said.

Shen to scour malls for funny people
 JENNER BEACH — America's Funniest People is looking for the area's funniest people this weekend in Jenner Beach, Boynton Beach and West Palm Beach.

The ABC television show's crew will be at the Treasure Coast Square mall from noon to 6:30 p.m. today looking for people with "amusing or unusual talents."

The crew will be at the Boynton Beach Mall from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and at the Palm Beach Mall in West Palm Beach from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

The show gives away \$10,000 in its weekly contest and searches for people with talents for jokes, impressions, unusual skills, lip-synching, singing, dancing or just about anything unusual.

The Post asks for Smith documents
 WEST PALM BEACH — The Palm Beach Post filed court papers Thursday asking Circuit Judge Mary Lapp to order prosecutors in the William Kennedy Smith case to release public documents.

Circuit Assistant State Attorney Kenneth Smith refused to release witness statements Thursday after Smith's attorneys filed a letter in court saying Lapp had not ruled on their request for two days before such statements are released.

On Wednesday, Lapp denied a defense request to sue the court file. Witness statements, however, become public when they are in the court file. The statements requested by The Post have already been given to Smith's attorneys.

Boy Beck, a Miami attorney leading Smith's defense, sent a letter to Selvig Thursday saying prosecutors are responsible for protecting Smith's right to a fair trial. Lapp rules on their request for two days' notice, the statements should be released, Beck wrote.

Lapp will hear arguments today about whether the statements should be released.

Teacher arrested on exposure charge
 WEST PALM BEACH — A Palm Beach County elementary school teacher who has taught for 14 years was charged Wednesday with exposing himself to an adult book store, according to Sheriff's Office reports.

Richard Rich, 41, of Greenacres, who has taught at Hagen Road Elementary in Boynton Beach for 13 years, was arrested about 5:30 p.m. at Herald's Adult Book Store and Video at 4188 Lake North Road in Lake Worth. A deputy reportedly watched him expose himself and masturbate, reports show.

"I am innocent," Rich said. "I didn't do it. That's all I have to say."

School district investigator Paul LaChance said he will investigate Rich. Rich will be suspended at this point because school is out, but he could be suspended if the investigation splits over into the school year, LaChance said.

Man dies of injuries in July 27 wreck
 WEST PALM BEACH — A 59-year-old Palm Springs man died Wednesday from injuries he received in a one-car accident July 27.

Guy S. Moore of 411 Springdale Circle died at St. Mary's Hospital, where he was taken after the late-night accident.

According to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Moore was speeding on Military Trail, south of Okechobee Boulevard, when he lost control of his 1989 Mitsubishi. He swerved back and forth across the road for more than 200 feet and finally struck a utility pole. The car then flipped two times and landed on Moore's side.

FAU North to be in new high school
 Gardens classes set to begin Aug. 26

By DON HORNE
 Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

PALM BEACH GARDENS — Florida Atlantic University is moving its north Palm Beach County campus to the new William T. Dwyer High School and preparing to expand the program, which for three years has operated in cramped quarters on two sites.

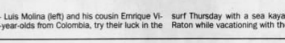
Classes will start Aug. 26, the same day high school classes begin. Most will be in the evening, with a few taught in the afternoon.

Officials hope the move will be temporary and that the campus soon will get a permanent home. But university reports have stalled PAU's plans to open a 620-acre campus on a Palm Beach Gardens site offered by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

PAU enrollment is expected to be about the same as last year — 1,400 — but officials expect a fairly large increase for the start of the winter term in January when more courses will be offered and four or six additional full-time faculty will be hired. There are now two.

In an extremely tight budget year, PAU officials aren't sure how many more courses can be added. This fall its undergraduate and 22 graduate courses will be offered — about the same as last year. The courses are taught by faculty from the main campus and adjunct professors.

"It's hard to tell with the budget cuts," said Vice President Robert



SURF FUN
 DELRAY BEACH — Luis Molina (left) and his cousin Enrique Villarreal Jr., both 8-year-olds from Coonhams, try their luck in the surf Thursday with a sea kayak. The pair are staying in Boca Raton while vacationing with their families.

Boyonnton residents unite to take back the streets

By JOE CAPOZZI
 Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

BOYNTON BEACH — Tired of turning their heads from trouble-making residents of an enclaved neighborhood nicknamed "Rock City" plans to establish a citizens' effort to reclaim streets from drug dealers.

Armed with placards, the Ridgeview Hills residents will hold a one-hour vigil at Northwest Fourth Avenue and Northwest 23rd Avenue on Wednesday at 6 p.m. today.

The quiet intersection, 2 blocks from an elementary school, is a popular center for drug activity, police Lt. William Galbraith said.

"We're going to physically reclaim the streets and disrupt the usual weekend drug business," said the Rev. Grassville Reed, an organizer who oversees the vigil.

The city train firefighters by burning crack houses.

"We want to send a message that this corner belongs to us," Reed said. The neighbors will hold vigils at the intersection every week until the drug dealers are gone for good. And if they go to another corner, we'll go there, too."

Commander-acting Dick Gregory will join the vigil. Gregory will picket the corner Aug. 14 at about 10 p.m. at Northwest Ramp Park on Aug. 17.

Galbraith said the grass-roots movement is a significant development in the Police Department's fight against drugs. "The people know what's happening. The problem always is getting them to help us," he said.

For years, residents who feared



Judge's son given probation for fight

By PAT WOODS
 Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

STUART — The son of a St. Lucie County judge was sentenced to a 2½-month probation term Thursday after pleading to a second battery charge for slapping a girl at a piano during a brawl at a night lounge.

Jeffery Louis Melillo, 21, son of Judge James Melillo, 21, son of Judge James Melillo, was arrested May 3 on a charge of aggravated battery after an off-duty police officer saw him slapping a girl during a piano performance at a drinking place at 4100 E. U.S. 1.

Hill, 33, received a large cut over his left eye and was treated at Martin Memorial Hospital, after 4½ months in jail.

Jeffery Melillo, of 649 Tradewinds Ave., Fort Pierce, would have faced a term of house arrest or one year in jail if convicted of the original charge, said Assistant State Attorney Robert Johnson, a special prosecutor assigned to the case from Palm Beach County.

Johnson agreed to a plea bargain deal that allowed the judge's son to plead no contest to a misdemeanor battery charge and collect a short term of probation.

Johnson and defense attorney Robert Watson persuaded Circuit Judge Robert Madson to allow Melillo to end his probation after 2½ months if he pays \$750 monthly bills to the Hill, performs 50 hours of community service and attends college.

Jeffery Melillo agreed to court with his mother, Fort Pierce attorney Gay Melillo.

Johnson said he agreed to allow

St. Lucie mails landfill tax reports

By JIM NEEDER
 Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

FORT PIERCE — St. Lucie County property owners are being notified this week how much will be added to their tax bills to pay for operation of the county landfill, officials said Thursday.

The notices were mailed Wednesday and should be received in the next few days," said Waste Assessment Coordinator Susan Lawrence said. "We've scheduled two public meetings to answer any questions people may have."

Those meetings will be at 6 p.m. Aug. 21 at the St. Lucie County Administration Building in Fort Pierce and Aug. 22 at Fort St. Lucie City Hall.

County commissioners have set a public hearing at 8 a.m. Aug. 27 on approving the special assessment roll for solid-waste disposal.

Owners of single-family homes will pay an additional \$75.48 on their tax bills for landfill operation while owners of other residences will be assessed \$90.

Residents who hold material in a barnyard or other area that is subject to the landfill tax will no longer have to pay a dumping fee if the gate effective Oct. 1, officials said.

Residents now pay the landfill disposal fees to their garbage haulers and those bills should be reduced by a similar amount although the county can't require them to reduce customers' bills, Assistant County Attorney Kenneth Storey said.

"I have met with each garbage hauler and they have agreed that they will no longer charge their customers for disposal," Robin Egan, St. Lucie County's recycling coordinator, said.

Businesses and multi-family projects with 10 or more units will continue to pay disposal fees to their garbage hauler.

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