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SECTION B

CITY & STATE

Friday, December 13, 1991 Austin American-Statesman

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Ivry Sharp's father indicted on injury charge

By Zeke MacCormack
American-Statesman Staff

Jeffrey Sharp was indicted Thursday by a Blanco County grand jury on a charge of injury to a child in connection with his daughter Ivry's death on Sept 10.

In a new development, District Attorney Sam Ostman said he now believes Ivry Sharp died from a blow from a roofing tool, not in a hit-and-run accident.

"We indicted him based on reports that he was throwing a roofing hatchet at a tree," Ostman said. A roofing hatchet is a tool, with a round hammerhead on one side and a blade on the other, used to install roof shingles.

"The theory is he was throwing the hatchet and it accidentally struck the child (on the head)," Ostman said Thursday night.

"We have evidence he has done that in the past with the children present." The Blanco County grand jury deliberated about five hours before indicting Sharp on a charge of causing serious bodily injury to a child by recklessness, a third-degree felony.

Sharp, 29, told investigators on Sept. 9 that he and Ivry were hitchhiking on U.S. 281 near Burnet about 8:30 p.m. when a van swerved off the road and struck her.

After Ivry died at Brackenridge Hospital the next morning, her father tearfully told reporters the drunken driver who struck her had stopped and apologized before driving off.

Authorities found fragments from a rearview mirror where Sharp said the accident occurred.

But an extensive search failed to locate the van, the driver or witnesses.

The story elicited an outpouring of sympathy from Austin-area residents, and a fund drive was started to benefit the Round Mountain girl's family.

But inconsistencies and changes in Sharp's account fostered widespread suspicion, and Ivry's funeral on Sept. 13 culminated with a fight among family members.

At the time, Sharp had been separated from his wife, LaFawn, for several months.

Travis County Medical Examiner Robert Bayardo said Ivry's injuries were inconsistent with Sharp's statements that her head was run over by a van tire.

Ruling the death a homicide, Bayardo said the girl died of a single blow to the head from a blunt instrument.

"We just don't feel the injury to Ivry happened on the highway," Ostman said Thursday.

If the van or driver is found, Ostman said he will abandon his hatchet theory, but not the case against Sharp.

Blanco County Sheriff Holton Burleson said Thursday the search for the van has not been abandoned.

"It really doesn't make any difference — he was still negligent in the handling of the child," he said, noting EMS responders reported Sharp appeared intoxicated.

"I don't know that we will ever know the exact cause of how that child died. But if not for the negligence of Jeff Sharp, she would not have died," he said.

Grand Juror Robert Grimmell

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Highways official met by criticism

Environmentalists say appointee 'disappointing'

By Debbie Graves
American-Statesman Capitol Staff

The new environmental affairs director for the Texas Department of Transportation is under attack by environmentalists, who have criticized his role on controversial Austin-area road projects.

Environmental lawyer Bill Bunch said "it is disappointing" that from 500 candidates, the department chose longtime employee Roland Gamble to head its new division of environmental affairs beginning Jan. 1.

Richards creates environmental SWAT team. B10

"This doesn't demonstrate any kind of change on behalf of the so-called 'new highway department,'" Bunch said.

Scott Royder, state conservation director for the Sierra Club, expressed similar sentiments. "Gamble's appointment just adds jet fuel to the flames and sends us the brazen message that the 'new' TDOT has no plans to even attempt to adequately address environmental impacts of highway projects," he said.

The Department of Transportation was created this fall when the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation was merged with other transportation-related agencies.

Gamble has worked for the highway department for more than 30 years and is the new agency's congressional liaison, making $54,600 annually. His new salary will be $63,000. He did not return telephone calls Thursday.

Despite the environmentalists' opposition, "the administration stands firm in its appointment," said Al Zucha, spokesman for the Department of Transportation.

In announcing the appointment Tuesday, Arnold Oliver, the department's director, praised Gamble as having "distinguished himself by planning and developing a transportation system that would meet the demands of a growing population and preserve the environmental integrity of the area."

As an engineer with the highway department's Austin district office in the 1980s,

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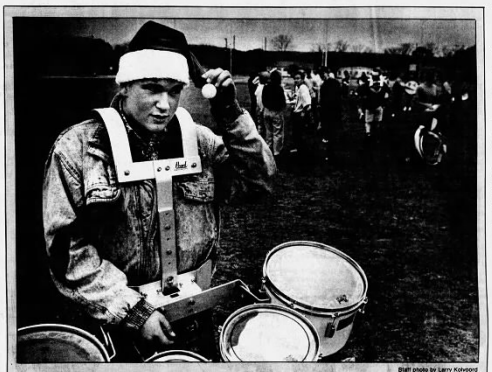

Staff photo by Larry Kolvoord

Taylor Autry, a percussion player in the Burnet High School band, adjusts his Santa hat before practice Thursday. The band will provide halftime entertainment when the school's football team plays Southlake Carroll in Waco on Saturday night.

MARCHING DOUBLETIME

Winning football teams keep high school bands on the run

By Scott W. Wright
American-Statesman Staff

As the season continues to drag on, they've been playing better and better. They practice hard several times a week. They review tapes of their performance to straighten out their formations.

Westlake and Burnet high school football players?

Nope.

We're talking bands here. As in half-time shows featuring crowd-pleasing, on-the-move music, twirling batons and waving flags.

Band directors at the two schools, whose football teams have made it to the state semifinals, say their imaginations have been working overtime trying to put new wrinkles in their marching routines.

Band members also have been working overtime.

"We really don't mind because we all want the football team to win," said Westlake senior and drum major Andy Price. "But we didn't get home from the game at Corpus Christi last week until 3:30 in the morning, and then we had to be at district band tryouts on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. It was a little rough."

Burnet High School band director Mike Lewis said his 58-member band

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VA urged to acquire Bergstrom hospital

By Stuart Eskenazi
American-Statesman Staff

Local veterans are trying to exert pressure on the Department of Veterans Affairs to acquire the hospital at Bergstrom Air Force Base, which could ensure continued access to medical care for Austin's retired military community.

VA acquisition may be the only way to guarantee the hospital remains open after the base closes in September 1993, said Bill McLemore, Travis County Veterans Service officer.

The VA, however, currently has no interest.

"We have just this past January opened a new satellite outpatient clinic in Montopolis," said Edgar Tucker, associate director of the Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center in Temple. "That clinic is developing well. We designed it for growth and expansion of services over time. We believe that facility will meet our needs in the Austin area."

Disabled veterans in the Austin area who need inpatient care now must travel to Temple, or other VA hospitals in Waco, Marlin or San Antonio. The 48,000-square-foot leased Austin Satellite Outpatient Clinic in Montopolis is the only VA medical facility in Travis County.

McLemore said 65,000 of the 193,000 veterans served by the Temple, Waco and Marlin VA hospitals live in Travis County. But they account for only 10 percent of the patient visits.

"That tells me medical care is inaccessible to Austin veterans," McLemore said.

Tucker, who was unable to verify McLemore's statistics, said the Montopolis clinic is averaging 120 patients a day.

"As Austin comes on line, we will see those percentages shift," Tucker said.

Glen Gardner, state adjutant/

See Bergstrom, B10

Judge seals autopsies of slain teens

By Kerry Haglund
American-Statesman Staff

In a highly unusual move, a district judge has sealed the autopsy reports on four teen-age girls found slain last weekend at a yogurt shop.

Travis County District Judge Jon Wisser said he sealed the reports at the request of the Travis County district attorney's office.

"The district attorney came over and asked me to do it because the details were essential to their investigation," Wisser said. "Whenever you arrest someone and they decide to give a confession, you have to have stuff that no one other than the one confessing knows about."

Travis County Medical Examiner Robert Bayardo said it's the first time results of an autopsy have been sealed in his 14 years as the county's medical examiner.

Assistant District Attorney Buddy Meyer said the reports likely will remain sealed until someone is arrested and charged with the crime.

"The reason that was done was because releasing the excruciating details of this crime could jeopardize the investigation, based on our experience," Meyer said. "It's not necessary in every case, but in this case it is."

Meyer said it is the first time in his 10 years with the district attorney's office that he recalls an autopsy being sealed.

Police on Thursday continued the investigation into the deaths of the girls — found shot in the back of the head after firefighters responded to a fire at the I Can't Believe It's Yogurt! shop at 2949 W. Anderson Lane on Dec. 6.

The bodies of Jennifer Harbison, 17; her sister, Sarah Harbison, 15; Eliza Thomas, 17; and Amy Ayers, 13, were found in the shop. Jennifer Harbison and Thomas were store employees.

Police continued Wednesday to ask for the public's help. They said anyone with information should call the homicide unit at 480-5035 or Crime Stoppers at 472-TIPS.

The I Can't Believe It's Yogurt! chain is offering a $25,000 reward for information leading to the indictment of those responsible for the slayings.

Child Inc. is requesting that everyone in the Austin area observe 60 seconds of silence at 11 p.m. today to commemorate the four teens, who are thought to have died around 11 p.m. Dec. 6.

The group, which has organized a citizen task force to help police investigate the deaths, also is asking people to drive with their headlights on and tie white ribbons on their car antennas.

Telephone call-in

Incidents such as the quadruple murder in Austin last week tend to accentuate concerns about crime and personal security in the community. This question, and those that appeared Wednesday and Thursday, gives readers a chance to respond to these issues by calling the *American-Statesman*'s call-in poll. Responses will be published Sunday.

Q. During the past year, have you purchased or obtained any personal, auto or home security devices (alarm system, Mace) as a defense against crime?

To participate, call 445-3858. Press 1 to respond "Yes" or press 2 to respond "No."

Yes — Press 1

No — Press 2

The line will be open until 6:30 p.m. today. Sorry, no comments can be taken, and only touchtone telephones can be used to register your response.

Journalistic players, stage are set for 'High Noon' in the Cold City

Billy Porterfield

The Great Dallas Newspaper War

It was the beginning of 1976, the last year of America's second century, the middle of the myopia Tom Wolfe dubbed the "Me Decade." It was the year a peanut farmer from Georgia won the presidency and started popping Tagamet. Viking 1 would land on Mars and find it a rocky desert with a pink sky. Ken Johnson found Dallas a bit more crowded but just as aloof and inviting. The harder Cold City was, the better he liked it.

He strode into the newsroom of the *Dallas Times Herald* its new executive editor and vice president, and when he skedaddled nine years later, persona non grata, he left Dallas with the two best newspapers it ever had.

Burl Osborne, the editor *The Dallas Morning News* brought in to counter Johnson, can say, "Whoa! Wait a minute." I'll take credit for my own paper, thank you. Osborne may rightfully claim he won the match between them. After all, he and *The News* are still standing, while the *Herald* is kaput and Johnson has been long gone.

But Johnson was the lightning rod, the stuff of Fourth Estate legend. And for as long as he had the blessing and the bankroll of the Times Mirror Co. back in Los Angeles behind him, he sparked both newspapers to new heights in a duel that was the talk of the town, then the country. If the *Herald* failed to surpass *The News* in total circulation and ad revenue, it got the nod from media critics. *Time* magazine ranked it among the top 10 dailies in America, and one of the five best in the South.

The kudos were not a trade-off between bouquets and the bottom line. The last year Johnson was editor, the *Herald* made $16.5 million profit, *The News* probably more. The Johnson/Osborne years were characterized by aggressive marketing and dynamic news coverage.

It was the momentum of the times that made Dallas ripe for media that were not timid. The revolution of the '60s had hit Big D in 1970 with Jim Lehrer's *Newsroom*, a nightly news report on the local Public Broadcasting Service station that opened to the Beatles' *Here Comes The Sun*. *Newsroom* took an hour to give viewers the lowdown the newspapers and commercial television newscasts had missed. Inland Dallas, fortress-like in its board room-and-bank vault character, began to open up, lowering the drawbridges over the Trinity River moats to all comers, among them Kenneth P. Johnson, lately of *The Washington Post*, the editor whom Times Mirror was counting on to revive the paper it had bought six years before.

Male, female, mendicant or favorite of the gods, Ken Johnson greeted everyone in Dallas with a jut-jawed "Hey, buddy" and a cocksure twinkle in his pale blue eyes. This tall, American-Nordic swashbuckler

See Players, B4

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