

Wreck victim's family awarded almost \$3.5 million

Plaintiffs blame seat belt for woman's 1992 death

Plaintiffs blame seat belt for woman's 1992 death. The driver of the Cadillac, Thomas Todd Harris, 73, also was killed.

Chrysler said the new design was planned by Chrysler beginning with cars produced for the model year 1992. He said the accident in which Williams died was the only one on record caused by a cut seat belt.

Williams family settled last year with the driver of another vehicle involved in the crash, and with the owner of a third vehicle, Chrysler said. The remaining defendants who settled Monday were Chrysler Corp., a San Antonio Chrysler dealership that sold the Cadillac to a car rental company, and Allied Signal Inc., a Delaware corporation that designed, manufactured and supplied the seat belt assembly. The terms of the settlement prevented Chrysler from saying there will be a public record of this case beyond the \$3.475 million.

The attorney for Allied Signal declined to comment Monday, and the company's general counsel could not be contacted Monday. Williams, 45, was a passenger in the Cadillac, which was being driven by her daughter, Barbara Williams, then 23. They were southbound when the driver of a northbound Cadillac lost control and struck another car before veering across the median and into the Accidents. The Plymouth was then hit from behind by another vehicle.

Williams said her daughter and granddaughter were in Austin last month. Barbara Williams had received a fellowship to do postgraduate work at Southeast Texas State University to spend and hearing pathology. She had planned to work with trauma victims, but after the wreck, she switched her studies to elementary education.

The other plaintiffs are Simmons' wife, Mary Simmons, and Patricia Williams' other daughter, Mickie Denise Williams, 20.

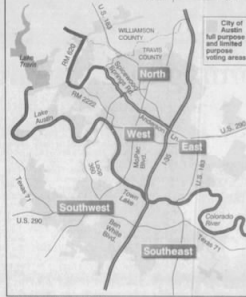
Leaders seek change in elections

Blighted: 'I don't think he would like it if somebody got the Legislature to override something he supported.'

Garcia said he will meet with Trevillion, members of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, League of United Latin American Citizens, and other groups after the June 4 council election. Garcia said he will talk to Sen. Barrantes, because we can't do anything if he doesn't approve. The Legislature convenes in January. Barrantes said Monday he will listen to Garcia and other minority leaders before making a decision about his support for the effort, but noted that "this thing has already failed five times."

Regional vote on single-member council districts (Proposition 1)

How different areas of Austin voted Saturday on the proposition to change election of city council members from at large system to one that would send eight members from geographic districts. In voting precincts where at least 60 percent of the voters are minority, Proposition 1 got 62 percent of the vote. In precincts that are at least 80 percent white, Proposition 1 got 30 percent approval.



Majority rule could jeopardize self-regulation of Texas lawyers

Referendum participation

The State Bar needs 51 percent participation in the referendum election, or 29,871 ballots. The following table, through Monday, represents the number of envelopes returned by members of the State Bar. Some of those envelopes, however, may contain only the ballot for officer elections and not for the referendum. Here is the percentage of participation in areas where more than 2,000 ballots were mailed:

CITY	NUMBER MAILED	NUMBER RECEIVED	PERCENTAGE RECEIVED
Austin	5,308	2,545	47.95
Houston	15,689	6,743	42.98
Dallas	12,817	1,851	14.48
Fort Worth	2,978	1,580	53.09
San Antonio	3,811	1,054	27.66
Out of State	4,788	1,817	37.95
Total (all areas)	58,778	27,738	47.03

But the total may be misleading because it is not certain every returned envelope contains a referendum ballot. Some lawyers may have returned only the ballot for officer elections, which do not require 51 percent participation. State Bar officials are prohibited from opening the envelopes until Monday. If lawyers again fail to regulate themselves as lawyer advertising, then the Legislature will do it for them, Rep. Steve Wolpin, D-Dallas, said. Wolpin, an environmental lawyer, sponsored a bill repealing lawyer advertising in 1993. The bill passed the House, but Wolpin pulled it before it reached the Senate floor when State Bar officials pleaded with him to allow lawyers to impose their own regulations. "If lawyers again fail to regulate themselves as lawyer advertising, then the Legislature will do it for them," Rep. Steve Wolpin, D-Dallas, said.

Meno's pay raise proposal 'inadequate,' teachers say

Continued from B1

only 8,000 of Texas' 200,000-plus teachers. "We continue to talk about building a world-class education system here, however, we pay our teachers far less than world-class systems to produce that product," he said. Meno's proposal would raise the minimum salary for a starting teacher to \$17,800. The 10 levels on the state minimum salary schedule would go up 4 percent, and two new levels would be added. Most teachers already make more than the state minimum. Kouri said Texas should at the least move toward the national average teacher pay of \$33,000 annually. A Texas State Teachers Association survey released last month found the average Texas teacher salary is \$30,249. Walter Hoggins of the Texas Federation of Teachers also noted that Meno's proposal would affect a small percentage of teachers, although he said, "We appreciate the gesture."



Education Commissioner Lionel 'Skip' Meno responds to testimony by state teachers' groups Monday.

Gonzalez's courage earns Kennedy award

Continued from B1

as chief prohibition officer in Bexar County. He was the first Mexican American to hold a seat in the Legislature, and he was not successfully re-elected in 1988 and the U.S. Senate in 1991. He ran for Congress after Kennedy sponsored the incumbent to a federal judgeship. When he became House banking committee chairman in 1988, Gonzalez said hearings that faced the blame for the savings and loan scandal on their executives and federal banking regulators. House Democratic colleagues launched an advertising that he did not support the bill. "I had to be particularly courageous," said Gonzalez, who said he has an autographed first edition of Profiles in Courage sent to him by Kennedy. Gonzalez also investigated the involvement of high-level officials in the Reagan and Bush administrations in the sale of U.S. arms to Iran before the Gulf war. He alleged that U.S. agricultural credit and export loans were used to help the Iraqi government buy nuclear and chemical weapons. Gonzalez said he called on his courage most when he found himself engaged in a contentious battle on the San Antonio City Council at the start of his political career.

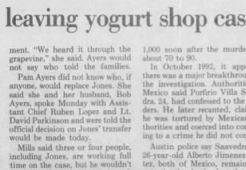


U.S. Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-San Antonio, was honored for his ethical conduct and pursuit of truth. "I had to learn early to never let fear rule," he said Monday. Previous recipients of the Profiles in Courage Award include former New Jersey Gov. James Florio, who pushed through the nation's strictest gun-control law; Connecticut Gov. Lowell Weicker, who successfully proposed a personal income tax in his state; George Supreme Court Justice Charles Warren, who withdrew his candidacy for re-election to Congress in 1960 rather than run on the same ticket as segregationist Lester Maddox; and former U.S. Congressman Carl Albert of Alabama, who took stands on civil rights and federal aid to education that were unpopular with his constituents. Gonzalez is serving his 17th term. He turned 73 last week.

Investigator leaving yogurt shop case

Continued from B1

relieved of the "day-to-day responsibility" for the case, he will continue to act as a consultant to the investigation. Sgt. Mike Hackbart, not Jones, has been leading the investigation for the past several months. Mills said, "There is not going to be any impact to the investigation if we make the switch tomorrow or three weeks from now." Mills said Monday for comment. Avers said that families of the slain girls were not told by the police department of Jones' resignation.



Austin police Sgt. John Jones will continue to work on the yogurt shop case as a consultant.

Fund set up for Beall's children

Continued from B1

A trust fund has been established at Bank One for the two children of an Anderson Mill murder victim last month in Round Rock. On April 20, Bettie Gay Beall, 41, was found shot to death in her pickup truck near downtown Round Rock. Beall was last seen at the H.E.B. store at RM 620 and U.S. 181 at about 1 a.m. the day she was killed. When she was found she still had her purse and a 14-year-old Round Rock teen has been charged with murder and is being held at the William S. Loft Juvenile Detention Center. Beall is survived by an 11-year-old daughter, Victoria, and a 5-year-old son, Michael. Both are staying with relatives. Contributions can be made to the Beall Children Fund and sent to Beatty Stephens at Bank One, P.O. Box 2268, Austin, Texas 78768-9909. For more information, call 479-3400. Corporate Lodging, where Beall worked, is a business for about a year, established the fund.

Officials are puzzled by thousands of dead fish along coast

By Kevin Moran

Thousands of dead fish littered beaches along the upper Texas coast Monday. Most of the dead fish are bay anchovy, but officials are puzzled by the cause of the largest fish kills in the area in years. By conservative estimates more than 50,000 dead fish — as well as

eight dead dolphins and 20 dead turtles — were found over the weekend along a 40-mile stretch of beach from Fort Belvoir to the Texas-Louisiana state line. Most of the dead fish are bay anchovy, but officials are puzzled by the cause of the largest fish kills in the area in years. By conservative estimates more than 50,000 dead fish — as well as

a toxic algae bloom like the "red tide" that killed 22 million fish along the Texas coast in 1963. Another possible culprit may be a bacterial or viral infection that mostly affects the bay-anchovy system, they said. Whittier Dutton, regional ornithologist for the Parks & Wildlife Department, said he had a dead fish being washing ashore for about a week. "Now the character of the event seems to be changing somewhat, as we're starting to see different types of fish washing up."