



Cornell Thomas cuts his Thanksgiving dinner turkey with a plastic fork Thursday while eating at civil rights leader Hosea Williams' Thanksgiving Dinner for the Needy in Atlanta, Ga. (AP photo)

Volunteers serve Thanksgiving meals to hundreds of thousands

By NOEL K. WILSON
Associated Press Writer

As volunteers fed hundreds of thousands of needy people across the nation, the holiday tables were turned at a housing camp where the recently homeless served Thanksgiving fare to their patrons.

"All over America, people are taking food, giving food to the homeless today," said Ted Hayes, a homeless activist involved in Genesis I, a cluster of homes that house 24 people of a parking lot near downtown Los Angeles.

"I think we have the only place where the homeless are serving back," he said as residents fed the project's donors, friends and the homeless.

In big cities and small towns, shelters and churches, generosity defined the spirit of the holiday.

In New York City, the Salvation Army served about 12,000 meals. But that was almost dwarfed by Raul Jimenez's annual feast in San Antonio: 20,000 people munching on 700 turkeys, 2,000 pounds of dressing and 750 gallons of green beans. And he kicked in a band for entertainment.

"For many of the people, it is their one day of the year to have fun. To watch them get up there and dance, it's pretty touching," said Jimenez, owner of a Mexican food company.

"They treat us like we're somebody, and that's mostly what we need," said Sophie Estrada, 68, who has attended the dinner for four years.

"Most of us live by ourselves, and we don't have anyone to be nice to us."

In Kokomo, Ind., volunteers made sure everyone made it to the table.

"We had a blind man call this morning, and he didn't have any family and he was alone, so somebody went and picked him up and brought him here," said Sheri Hale, a member of the Kokomo Rescue Mission.

Along with family, friends and food, Thanksgiving means fun: The Macy's 68th annual Thanksgiving Day parade stole the show for thousands of kids and young-at-heart adults. Millions more watched the marching bands and five-story-high cartoon character balloons on television.

A parade newcomer, Dr. Seuss' Cat in the Hat, lost a little helium and ended up with a deflated paw. Barney, the purple dinosaur, almost took a dive after hitting a lamppost and tearing a hole in his side.

"I like Garfield best," 7-year-old Hannah DeLeon said.

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State senator ponders limits on child molestation bill

HOUSTON (AP) — A state senator says he may soften his proposal for requiring life imprisonment with no parole for anyone convicted of sexually molesting a child.

Sen. John D. Whitmire, D-Houston, said last weekend that he would back legislation next year for mandatory life prison sentences without parole for those convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a child. That would include the rape of children younger than 14.

This week, he said he would consider allowing parole for molesters convicted only of fondling children. However, he wants to consult with prosecutors and other experts first.

"I'm talking about aggravated child molesters. I would have to see what the distinction is," Whitmire told the *Houston Chronicle*.

A spokesman for criminal defense lawyers said life without parole is too harsh for such a crime. But a leader of a crime victims' advocacy group applauded Whitmire's original proposal.

Whitmire, chairman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, raised the issue of harsher punishment for child molesters during a ceremony last Saturday to honor him as Texas' "governor for a day."

"It appears they (child molesters) cannot be rehabilitated," Whitmire said then.

"I would anticipate next session that because we have the new (prison) capacity ... we'll pass legislation requiring sex offenders of children to be locked up without any consideration for parole, locked up for life with no parole," he said.

"That's pretty Draconian," said John Boston, executive director of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

"We would be concerned because of the lack of safeguards for those falsely accused."

Boston said he had no statistics to illustrate the problem, but he believes child molestation and abuse cases are "rife" with false accusations made by children or former

spouses involved in bitter custody battles.

Boston pointed out that the new state penal code, which Whitmire sponsored, already requires aggravated child molesters assessed life sentences to serve at least 30 years behind bars before they are eligible for parole.

"I think the punishment's harsh enough now," he said.

John Bradley disagrees. Bradley, an assistant district attorney in Williamson County, said life without parole "certainly does raise the ante." But he said he feels "pretty comfortable" that prosecutors have enough training to determine which cases have merit.

Daring escape, a trip, capture

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Lawyers and judges stroll out of a courthouse for lunch as deputies lead three lethargic, shackled men through a crowded small-town square.

A young woman suddenly appears, brandishing a shotgun. She orders the deputies to unchain her boyfriend. They have no choice — they can't risk a gunfight in the noontime traffic.

The man and the woman dash away and steal a powder-blue Cadillac from two old ladies. They head for the land of Elvis, get married and continue their tour of the South. Captured on a coastal island eight days later, they laugh on their way to jail.

The tale of Gordon Ray Thomas, his bride Consuella Monique Gaines-Thomas and their 1,100-mile journey could pass for a movie script full of love and wanderlust.

"She had never gone anywhere, and she wanted to go sightseeing," Chief Criminal Deputy Laura Balthazar said Wednesday as she described the events that led to the capture of the couple Nov. 18 in Georgia.

On Nov. 10, Thomas was sentenced to 20 years in prison for armed robbery. Minutes later, Balthazar said, his two-months-pregnant girlfriend helped him escape outside the

courthouse in Opelousas, about 130 miles northwest of New Orleans.

Then, according to Balthazar: The couple, both 23, took the Cadillac and headed north to Little Rock, Ark., via Texarkana, Texas. "They followed a prison bus all the way. They thought that was the safest thing to do."

They had saved a few thousand dollars and planned to fly from Miami to Jamaica. But they decided to drive on to Memphis, Tenn. and stopped several police officers for directions.

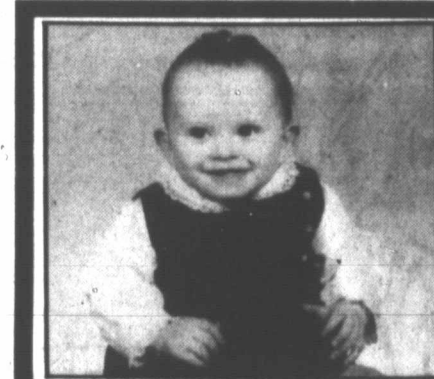
They toured Elvis' Graceland mansion and tried to find a place to stay, but hotels were booked with a convention of Baptist ministers. So they took advantage of the situation, picked a minister and got married Nov. 15.

They hit Nashville and Chattanooga, Tenn., then drove down to Tybee Island, just off the Georgia coast from Savannah.

"The only reason they ended up in Tybee Island was she wanted to see the beach," Balthazar said.

They would get no farther. As Thomas was putting the shotgun into the car at a trailer park, it went off by accident and residents called police.

The only way off the island was by bridge. One roadblock later, the honeymoon was over.



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**Man accused
of beheading
fortuneteller**

By MICHAEL SCHNEIDER
Associated Press Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — People came to Deborah Stevens looking for answers.

The matriarch of her Gypsy family, Mrs. Stevens would place candles, incense and a Bible on a table, then carefully lay out tarot cards that foretold success in business or ill fortune in love.

Now police are the ones with the questions. Mrs. Stevens' beheaded body was found last week near the front door of her home, and a down-on-his-luck man who had consulted her for advice has been charged with murder.

Two hours after Mrs. Stevens' son found her body and the head 10 feet away, Douglas Clark tried to jump in front of an Amtrak train.

Somehow, the train missed Clark, and he was found by Amtrak police near the tracks about 1 1/2 miles from Mrs. Stevens' house. Then, as a city police truck pulled up, Clark broke away from Amtrak officers and twice tried to throw himself under the moving truck.

Police had no suspicions about Clark being involved in Mrs. Stevens' death — until he began talking about the killing to paramedics who were treating him for minor injuries, said Officer Rob Weinholt, a police spokesman.

When Clark was taken to a hospital he continued to talk about the killing to doctors, Weinholt said.

Police said they still had no possible motive Thursday, and no murder weapon had been found.

Clark, 28, was unemployed and had moved in with his mother and sister in their east Baltimore rowhouse. Neighbors in the blue-collar neighborhood about a dozen blocks from Mrs. Stevens' house described him as a quiet, friendly man who came from a good family.

"It's totally out of character for him," said Judy Larson, who owns a grocery store across the street from the Clarks' house. "He's quiet, not much talking. I always tried to make him laugh."

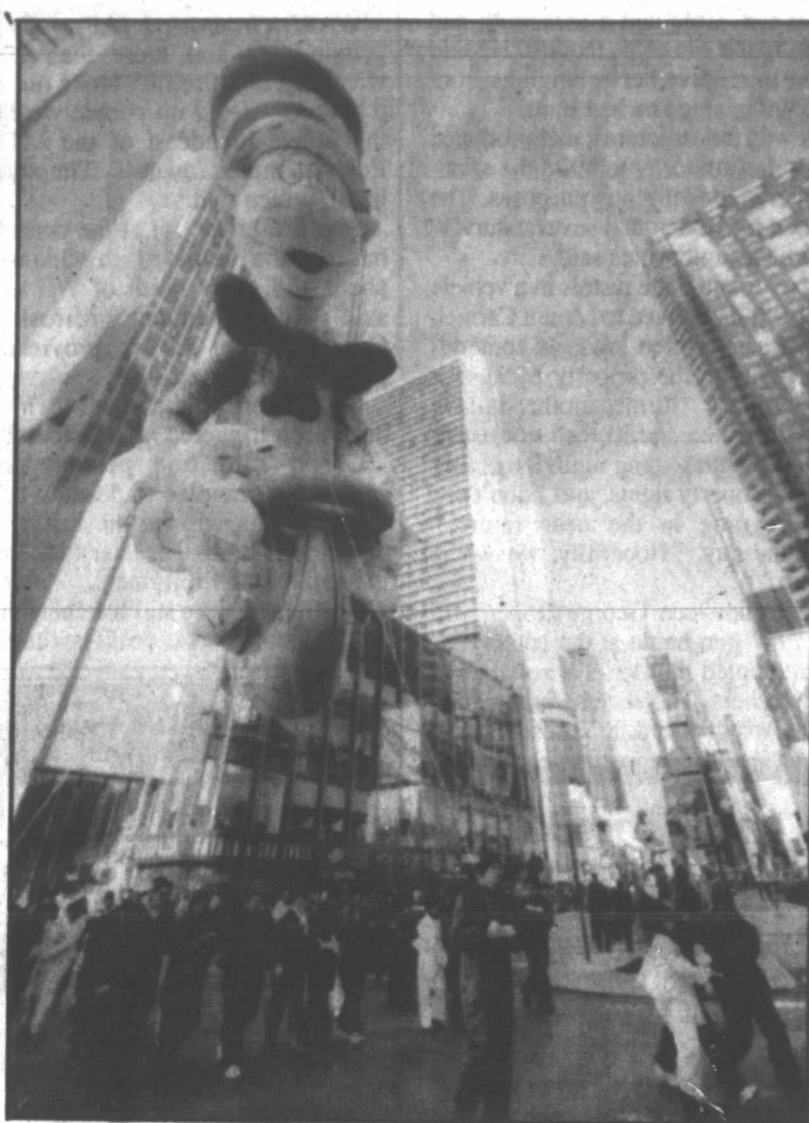
Mrs. Stevens, 62, called herself "Sister Myra." She opened her fortune telling business more than 25 years ago while her now-deceased husband, Walter, worked the East Coast carnival circuit.

She was as much a dispenser of advice as a teller of fortunes, said Preston Pairo, a friend of the family acting as its spokesman.

"She was the poor person's listener — for the person who was lonely and feels they have problems and can't afford a \$100 session with a psychiatrist," he said.

Mrs. Stevens was born in Chicago, but spoke with a heavy Eastern European accent.

The Cat in the Hat



The Cat in the Hat makes its way down Broadway during Macy's 68th Annual Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City on Thursday. New to this year's parade, the balloon of the classic Dr. Seuss children's storybook classic stands 59 feet tall and 40 feet wide. (AP photo)

Russia launches ballistic missile

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia successfully launched an intercontinental ballistic missile with multiple dummy warheads from the Baikonur cosmodrome in northern Kazakhstan, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported today.

The missile, which normally carries nuclear warheads, had been on combat duty in a Russian unit and was launched Thursday to check the reliability of its systems, ITAR-Tass said.

"All the dummy warheads hit the designated areas, which confirms the high reliability of Russian strategic missiles," military experts said. ITAR-Tass did not say where the warheads had been targeted.

Baikonur, which was the Soviet Union's main space launching facility, has continued to be used by Russia for many of its civilian and military launches since the Soviet collapse.

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Appeals court upholds patents for AIDS drug AZT

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court says Burroughs Wellcome Co. is entitled to five patents for AZT, the primary drug for treating AIDS.

The decision Tuesday by the panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals rejected claims by two generic drug manufacturers that Burroughs, of Research Triangle Park, N.C., was not exclusively entitled to the patents because some preliminary testing was done at the National Institutes of Health.

The opinion upheld a 1993 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina on five of six patents that were being contested by Barr Laboratories Inc. and Novopharm Ltd. The patents dealt with various uses of AZT in combating the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, which causes AIDS.

For the sixth patent, the appeals court said the district court ruling was "premature" and that Novopharm should be given an opportunity to support its claim by presenting evidence at trial.

AZT, or zidovudine, was developed in the 1960s as a possible cancer drug, but was found to be unpromising for that use. Burroughs Wellcome tested it in the 1970s as an anti-viral drug.

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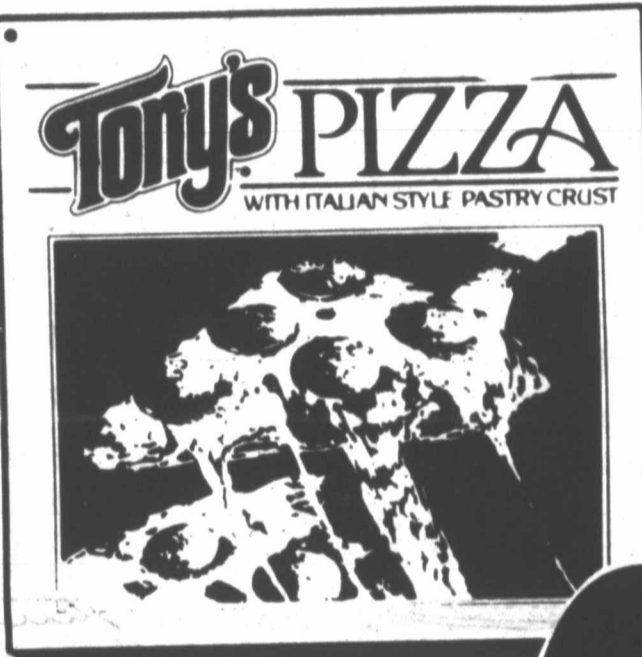
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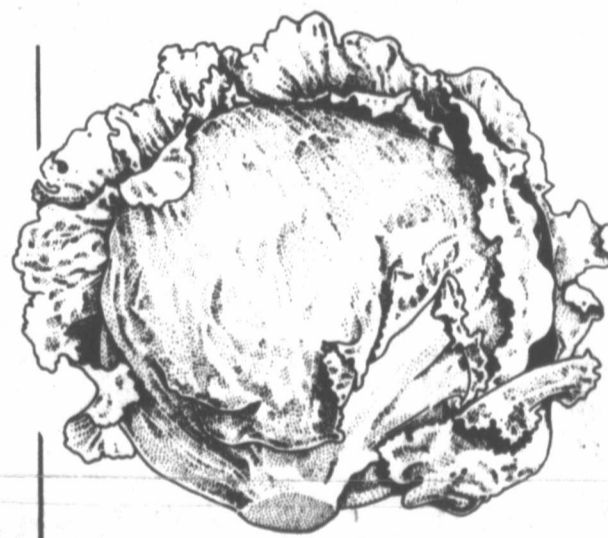
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From football to traditional San Antonio feast, Texans give thanks

By The Associated Press

From Raul Jimenez' traditional holiday feast to football to the home of reunited Vietnamese immigrants, Texans took a breath between the year's busiest travel and shopping days to enjoy Thanksgiving.

Perhaps the largest gathering Thursday was in San Antonio, where Jimenez, owner of a Mexican food company, hosted his traditional free feast for about 20,000 at the Convention Center.

"We cooked 700 turkeys, 2,000 pounds of dressing, 750 gallons of green beans," Mark Trevino said of the gathering, which also features a band.

"We feed anybody that comes through the door, mostly low-

income senior citizens. We've seen a lot of families this year. We provide food and entertainment. For many of the people, it is their one day of the year to have fun. To watch them get up there and dance, it's pretty touching," said Trevino, who assists at the feast.

Sophie Estrada, 68, has attended the dinner for four years.

"I like the companionship, I like the music and I like the food," Ms. Estrada said.

In Waco, thousands of Texas and Baylor fans gathered for a 10 a.m. Southwest Conference football match. Though the game was close in the first half, Texas stomped Baylor and its Cotton Bowl hopes 63-35.

In Dallas Thursday afternoon, Cowboy fans packed Texas Stadium hoping to see the injury-riddled Super Bowl champions defeat the Green Bay Packers. After the game, Green Bay fans planned to gather for a steak.

Some Hutchins' residents had to copend with no running water as they cooked their holiday dinners. A water main had broken, cutting off the water supply.

In West Texas, Big Bend National Park bustled with non-traditional Thanksgiving celebrations.

Park officials say Thanksgiving is generally their busiest weekend with visitors and campers who pass up their turkey dinners for trail mix and hiking or rafting in some of the state's most rugged country.

The reason is the weather — tem-

peratures in the park, a portion of the Chihuahuan Desert, are the mildest in early spring and late fall.

Others stories of Thanksgiving in Texas were as varied as those who told them.

Minh Nguyen celebrated Thanksgiving in Dallas with his family for the first time in six years. He and his son fled Vietnam in January 1988. But his wife, two daughters and other son didn't arrive until this year.

"Wednesday, July 27, at 9:30 p.m.," Nguyen said, the day, date and time etched in his memory. He even remembers the airline, the flight number, where the plane was coming from and the gate number.

"Now that we are all in America, we learn American culture and ways," Nguyen said. "We used to not have Thanksgiving, but now I have something to be thankful for. We all like it here very much."

Price bubble has burst, but emu raisers shrug it off

By ROGER MUNNS
Associated Press Writer

ST. CHARLES, Iowa (AP) — This is one big bird that's had a great fall: The bottom has dropped out of the market for emus. Not to worry, say their defenders, who argue prices for the birds need to come down to boost sales.

"Two summers ago I bought two pairs, \$9,000 for one and \$7,000 for the other. I took the \$7,000 pair down there (to a Texas auction) and they brought \$2,400," said Dennis Wienhold of Newell.

Kathy Schwartz of Cumming jumped into the business last April and bought two breeding pairs at \$18,000 a pair. "If I had waited a few months, I could have gotten them for half the price," she said.

This would be a catastrophe in a major livestock market. But emu ranchers, even those who were burned, said it's a sign that emus are slowly marching away from a market just for breeders to an affordable commercial market.

"It might take me longer to make a profit, but I'll recover," Schwartz said.

Emu farmers sing the praises of the flightless bird, an Australian cousin of the ostrich. Its beef-like meat is low in cholesterol and fat, they insist. The skin makes leather, its feathers are decorative and oil from glands on its back has uses as a skin cream and for arthritis relief.

But emu on the Thanksgiving table? Skeptics say they will go the way of soy burgers and cite other "can't miss" investments that missed.

"Since I was a kid, I've seen all sorts of wonder animals — chin-chillas, llamas, elk, ostriches, long-horn cattle and emus — and I'm skeptical of any line of product which appears to be no more than a form of Ponzi scheme where the profits depend on selling at an inflated price to new breeders," said Wythe Willey, president-elect of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association.

Roger Hogan of Redfield said he made big money when prices were up.

"In reality, we got a little starchy eyed," he said. "We got a little cocky when prices were good, so when they dropped, it scared everybody."

He said that at the peak, about 1 1/2 years ago, he was selling 6-month-old chicks for about \$14,000 a pair. "Right now, I'm selling 4-, 5-month-old chicks for \$1,500 to \$2,000 a pair."

The birds — standing 5 to 6 feet tall as adults and weighing 120 to 150 pounds — walk gracefully on feet that look like gloved hands. They're curious and friendly.

They're also dumb as a radish.

"They've got itty-bitty brains, so they can't be real smart. But they know enough to get in out of the rain," said Randy Hasenclever, president of the 70-member Iowa Emu Association.

For now, the only place to sell an emu for slaughter is Emu Ranchers Inc. of Richardson, Texas. ERI will buy your bird for \$5 a pound, minimum weight 70 pounds. Growers still can generally get more by selling to breeders, so only culled birds wind up at ERI.

"We're processing about 15 a day, about 80 in the last month," said Ellen "Chickie" Darder, production manager of ERI.

The meat is frozen and sells for \$10 a pound for steaks, \$8 for ground meat. She said ERI has no trouble selling the product.

"It's a little pricey. We hope to bring it down. We hope it's the beginning of the commercial market," she said.

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FCC considers tougher regulations on switching long-distance service

By JEANNINE AVERSA
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chip Ringo had a bit of a shock when he opened his October phone bill. It wasn't the \$155 in charges that disturbed him, but the unauthorized switch to a different long-distance company.

Federal regulators say Ringo's experience is not uncommon. More than 4,000 complaints about sudden switches have been logged at the Federal Communications Commission since 1992. That's when the FCC adopted rules designed to protect consumers from "slamming" — having their long-distance providers changed without permission.

Given the volume of complaints, the FCC is considering tougher regulations. An increasing number of complaints involve long-distance companies that use contests, prize giveaways, checks and other promotions to lure new customers.

In many of these cases, regulators say, people are unaware that by signing the contest form or consenting to a charitable donation, they have agreed to switch to another

long-distance company.

If the authorization information is included on the form, they say, it is often buried somewhere in tiny print.

The form that led to the switch for Ringo was an offer of \$50 to lure customers to AT&T. But Ringo said he never sent in the form.

Ringo, who was switched from MCI, said he called AT&T and told them he didn't authorize a change. Weeks went by.

In the end, AT&T recalculated the bill, reducing charges to reflect discounts Ringo would have received through MCI, he said.

Although he received an apology from AT&T, the company never explained why his service was switched.

AT&T spokesman Jim McGann told The Associated Press that the company had received an authorization form to switch service. But the form, McGann admitted, was signed by someone else, although it had Ringo's phone number.

"We want to protect consumers," FCC Chairman Reed Hundt said in an interview. "There is not fair competition when companies play fraudulent games."

One of the FCC's proposals would require long-distance companies to provide consumers a piece of paper authorizing a change in service that is separate from the promotional material.

Language explaining the authorization must be clear and the print must be big enough to read easily, the FCC said.

The proposed rules would also pro-

hibit "negative option" forms. That's when customers are required to check a box if they don't want their long-distance company changed.

A Dallas couple, who didn't check such a box near the bottom of a form they received last year, had their service switched from AT&T to Heartline Communications, according to a complaint filed at the FCC. In this case, Heartline's authoriza-

tion prominently featured a drawing of two children on a tricycle and the company's logo — two clasped hands set in the shape of a heart.

In big print it stated: "Raising Funds for National Children's Charities."

In smaller print: "Two percent of my domestic long distance bill ... will be donated to a national children's charity every month or as long

as I remain on the service..."

Gloria Cross, who said she handles FCC complaints for Heartline, said the company routinely uses this type of authorization. "It is not a gimmick," she said. "That's what we do."

Houston-based Heartline told the FCC that when the couple asked, it switched their service back to AT&T and recalculated the bill based on AT&T's rates.

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'60s songwriter Tommy Boyce commits suicide

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tommy Boyce, part of the singing-songwriting duo of Boyce and Hart who penned "Last Train to Clarksville" and other hits for the Monkees, shot himself to death. He was 55.

Boyce's wife, Carolyn, found him dead in the living room of the couple's home Wednesday. He left a note, but police would not reveal its contents.

While best known for their songwriting, Boyce and partner Bobby Hart also recorded some of their songs, achieving a Top 10 hit with "I Wonder What She's Doing Tonight" in 1967 and another hit with "Alice Long."

The duo first gained fame in the

early '60s, writing "Pretty Little Angel Eyes," a hit in 1961 for Curtis Lee, and "Come a Little Bit Closer," a top five hit for Jay and the Americans in 1964.

In 1966, producers appointed Boyce and Hart musical directors for the NBC television series *The Monkees*, which debuted in September of that year.

The group became a chart as well as a ratings success. Among the songs Boyce and Hart contributed to their roster of hits were "(I'm Not Your) Stepping Stone" and "The Monkees Theme (Hey, Hey, We're the Monkees)."

After being a part of the West Coast pop music scene for years,

Boyce moved to England in the late 1970s, where he worked with artists including Iggy Pop and Meatloaf.

More recently he moved to Tennessee, where he maintained homes in Nashville and Memphis and occasionally performed locally.

He sometimes would drop by Nashville's Bluebird Cafe for Sunday night writers nights, said Gail Carson, who ran the weekly events for five years.

"He was somewhat introspective," Carson said. "He'd sit there and listen, and he'd talk to any of the writers who wanted to talk to him."

Boyce, a native of Charlottesville, Va., moved to California with his family when he was a child.

Court rules in favor of DNA case

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — A California appeals court has upheld the use of DNA evidence, the same type of evidence at issue in O.J. Simpson's murder trial.

The ruling does not directly affect the Simpson trial, but could be considered by Superior Court Judge Lance Ito when he decides on the admissibility of DNA evidence for that trial.

"This was an extremely important decision," said Frederick R. Millar Jr., supervising deputy state attorney general. "We anticipate it will have a significant impact not only in California, but across the country."

The state Fourth District Court of Appeal called DNA evidence "highly reliable and relevant" in a unanimous ruling Wednesday that upheld the conviction of Frank Lee Soto. Soto, 34, was sentenced to three years in prison for the attempted rape of a 79-year-old woman.

Prosecutors based their case largely on DNA taken from semen found on the woman's bed. The victim later had a stroke and couldn't testify against Soto.

Prosecution experts said the chance of the semen coming from anyone other than Soto was one in 189 million.

But defense experts put the probability at anywhere from one in 71 to one in 39,000. Richard Schwartzberg, Soto's lawyer, argued that DNA evidence shouldn't be admissible because of that disagreement among scientists.

The appeals court, however, ruled that most geneticists accept the calculation method used by the prosecution experts, and that the evidence is too compelling to ignore.

"Because DNA is so highly reliable and relevant, to allow a minor academic debate ... to snowball to the point that it threatens to undermine the use of it in court is throwing the baby out with the bath water," wrote Presiding Judge David G. Sills.

In the Simpson case, Ito has scheduled a hearing for Dec. 15 on the admissibility of DNA evidence from blood and hair.

"While a decision by the Fourth District is not binding upon Ito, it's very persuasive authority," said Erwin Chemerinsky, a criminal and constitutional law professor at the University of Southern California.

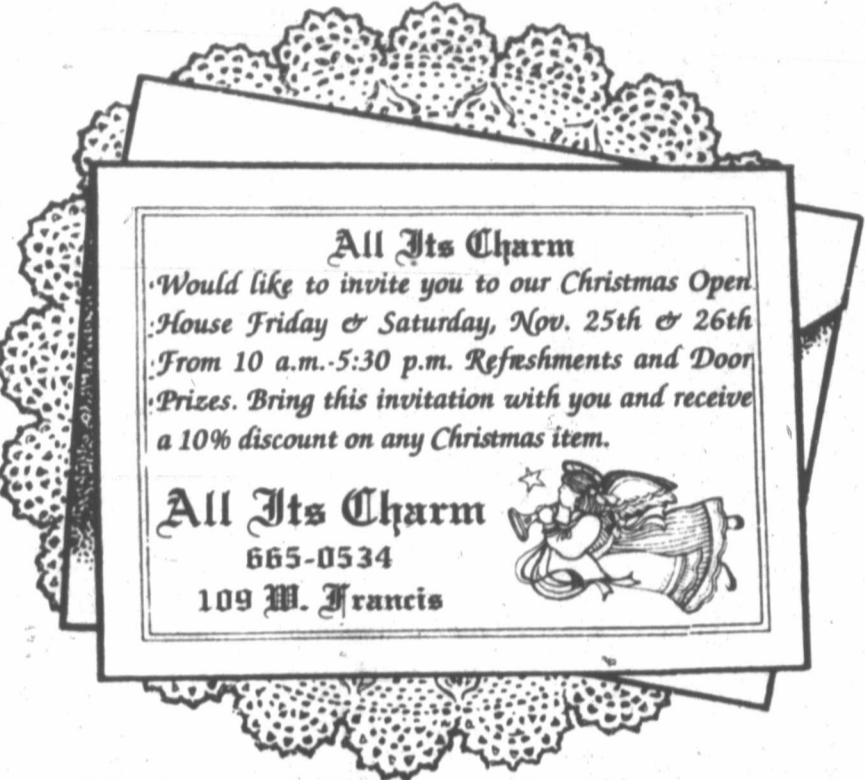
Ito's court in Los Angeles falls under the jurisdiction of the Second District Court of Appeal, not the appellate panel that made the DNA ruling.

It would take a ruling by the California Supreme Court to set precedent for courts statewide.

Schwartzberg said he plans to appeal to the state Supreme Court, but if that court agrees to hear the case a ruling could take months.

"We as a society have become too technology-oriented," Schwartzberg said. "It's to the point where if scientists tell a jury that black is white, there's a good chance they'll believe them."

DNA evidence compares a defendant's genetic makeup with that found in samples of blood or other material from a crime scene.



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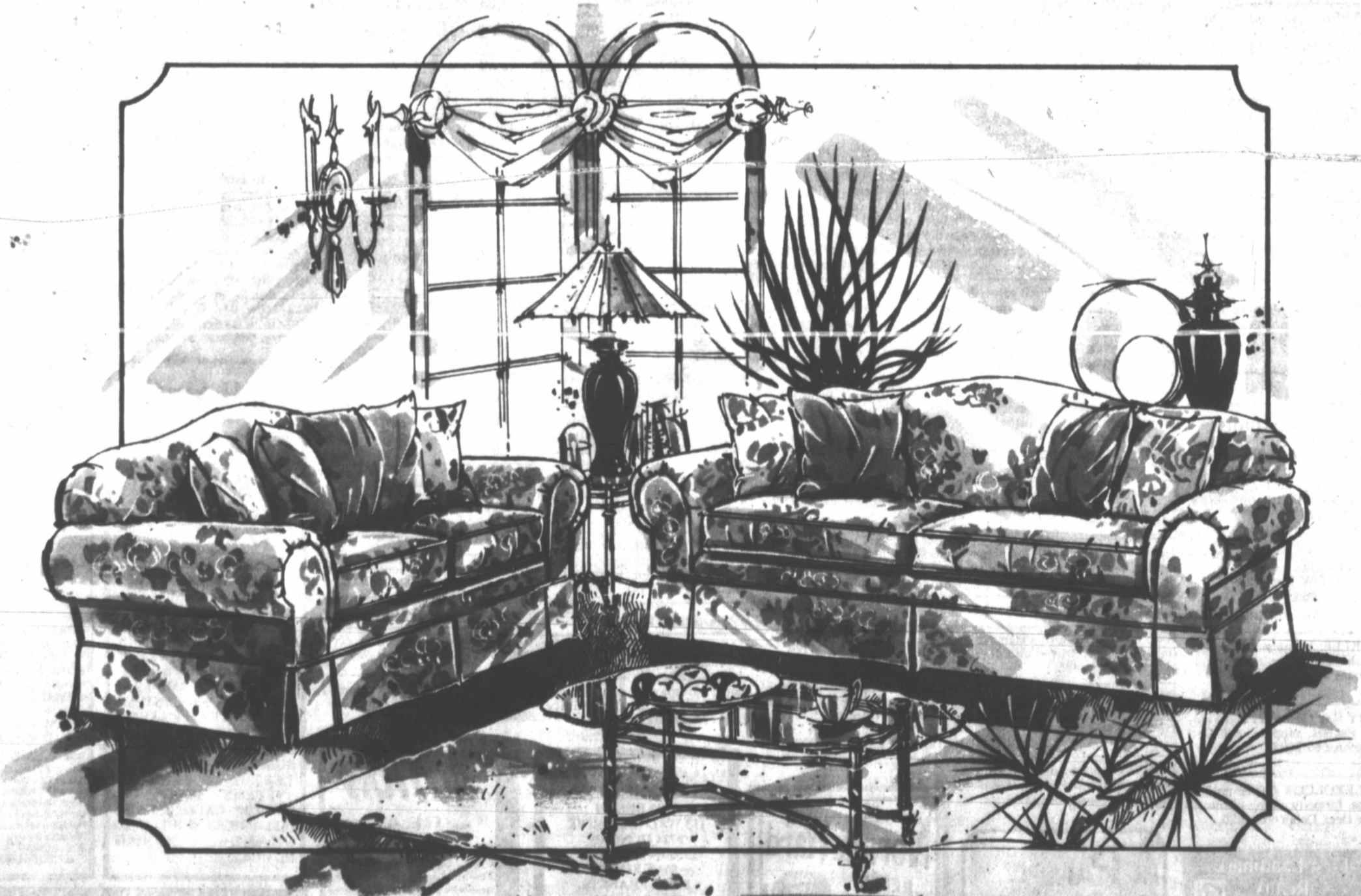
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