

JOHNSON TAPES LBJ Library gives people the chance to hear 13 hours of conversations from the late president ■ B3 | INVESTIGATION A middle school teacher whose body was found in Lady Bird Lake was facing scrutiny over charity's money ■ B6

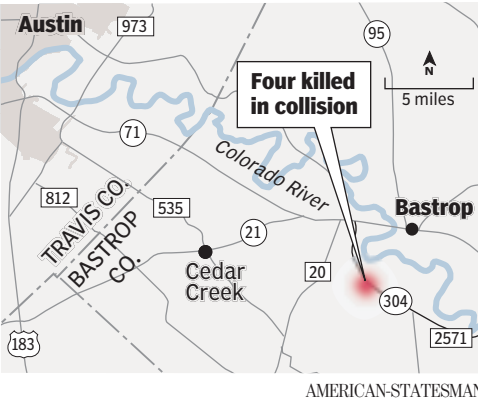


W. GARDNER SELBY

Hollywood should mine Eldorado for box office gold

Somewhere, no doubt, a screenwriter is watching the child-abuse investigation that started in West Texas. If they're looking for a government hero to declare himself in Austin, they might have to wait a spell. But what a movie. The writer can already script at least two plot twists, starting with possibly hoax telephone calls and again with children as young as 12 months getting yanked from the women they lived with on a Schleicher County ranch near Eldorado. The spread is run by a polygamist group, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Some teenaged children have turned out to be pregnant, possibly a sign of sexual abuse. Other children have a history of broken bones. And mysteriously, authorities have not found the 16-year-old "Sarah" who reportedly telephoned a crisis line from the ranch; it could be that a Colorado woman, since arrested, impersonated the girl. At any rate, someone's March calls touched off the ranch raid that started April 3. A judge later ordered more than 400 children removed from their mothers or caregivers and sent to group homes and foster care facilities. State leaders, deferring to on-the-scene investigators, appear cautious about saying which way is up. Since the raid, Gov. Rick Perry and Attorney General Greg Abbott, the state's chief law enforcement official, have issued piles of press releases. They've both announced appointments. Perry has distributed grants to local governments, established a summer science academy and urged the federal government to scale back an ethanol mandate. Abbott has snagged a child-support evader, deterred a man from preying on children over the Internet and stopped the sale of fake international driver's licenses. Neither has popped a word from their press shops on what's unspooling in West Texas. With the 2009 legislative session less than nine months away, maybe they're calculating how much money to pour into child abuse and neglect investigations. Perry's office did distribute an Anita Perry column reminding that April was Child Abuse Awareness Month. Some 223 Texas children lost their lives last year as a result of abuse by a guardian or caregiver. "To what degree could these statistics change," Anita Perry writes, "if neighbors simply paid more attention to the families around them?" Leaders could be stewing over another question: To what degree do the Schleicher See SELBY, B3

BASTROP COUNTY ■ TRAFFIC FATALITY



Head-on wreck kills mother, two daughters, man

By Joshunda Sanders AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF A mother and two of her three daughters were killed Tuesday evening when her Ford Excursion and a Jeep Grand Cherokee collided on Texas 304 three miles south of Bastrop, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety said. The driver of the Jeep, 38-year-old Darrell Avery, also died in the crash, Tom Vinger said. He said that Avery was a Bastrop resident but that his driver's license shows his most recent address as being in Arkansas. Cara Crisler, 27, of Cedar Park, who Vinger said was driving the Ford, was taken to the University Medical Center at Brackenridge in Austin, where she died about 10 a.m. Wednesday. See CRASH, B3

LOCKHART ■ EMERGENCY SERVICES

Official: Medic erred on death

Former EMS worker says he's been wrongly accused of declaring wreck victim dead

By Tony Plohetski AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

A City of Lockhart paramedic declared a person dead even though the victim was revived a short time later and taken to University Medical Center at Brackenridge, the city's Emergency

Medical Services director said Wednesday. The paramedic, Jerry Dickerson, said he is being wrongly accused of declaring the person dead and that he was never questioned about how he handled the call near Texas 21 and U.S. 183. He said he resigned the day of the April 17 incident for "ongoing personal harassment from the management of Lockhart EMS." He declined to say how he evaluated the patient. Lockhart City Manager Vance Rodgers said the city is investigating the incident. The patient's condition was not known

Wednesday. An accident report describing the crash, which would list the names of victims, was not immediately available from the Texas Department of Transportation. "I think everybody did the best they could do in a bad situation," EMS Director Melanie Tucker said. Tucker said that the medic who declared the person dead was driving an ambulance to Austin with a patient from an unrelated call when he came upon the accident. She did not identify See FATAL, B3

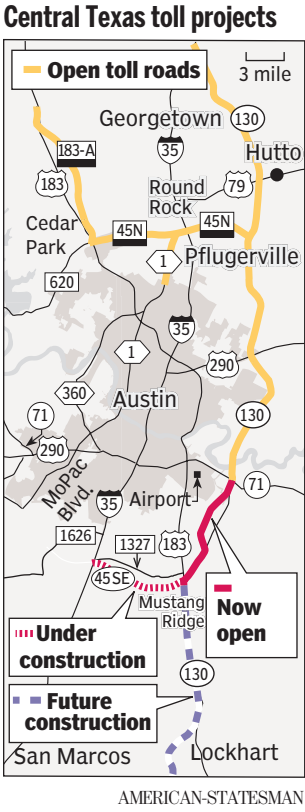
CENTRAL TEXAS ■ TRANSPORTATION



8.7 miles of open(ed) road

Drivers can now get from U.S. 183 in Mustang Ridge to Texas 71 east of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport using the newly opened segment of Texas 130. Driving on the 8.7-mile tollway stretch is free in May and June. In July, cash customers start paying, and those with toll tags will drive for half-price. Starting Aug. 1, drivers will pay full tolls: \$1.50 for cash customers, \$1.35 for drivers with toll tags and \$1.80 for those with no cash or toll tag. (They'll get a bill in the mail later.)

Ricardo B. Brazziell photos AMERICAN-STATESMAN



MARK STONE ■ 1986-2008

Soldier was a listener who could always be counted on, friends say

By Marty Toohey AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Three days after Mark Stone was killed in Iraq, the memories he left with friends and relatives are coalescing into a single, distilled image. It's not the 22-year-old Army sergeant. It isn't the gunner killed in Iraq when a mortar hit his truck. It's the young man from just outside Marble Falls, the lanky guy with dark blond hair who listened quietly, with a somber expression, to what everyone had to say. Change the remembered setting; the quiet manner remains. "He chose his words wisely," said Zane Lewis, Stone's best friend. "He would never talk just to talk." The two met at Kingsland Christian Academy, a 40-student high school that stayed open an extra year so Stone could graduate from it, said Joannie Jackson, whose husband ran the school. Lewis described Stone as the guy who one time helped him, without a word of complaint, unload an entire

@ statesman.com Sign a guest book for Sgt. Mark Stone with this story online.



Mark Stone had just been promoted to sergeant.

truckload of printers for the family business. It's the kind of thing Stone was always willing to do, Lewis said, seemingly just for the chance to hang out. The Rev. Calven McCrary, former principal of Kingsland Christian, describes the teenage Stone as someone who struggled with algebra lessons and wanted a swimming pool in the backyard. The family couldn't afford the pool — Stone's mother had died a few years earlier, and a back injury kept his father out of the mills and truck cabs — so Stone See STONE, B3

AUSTIN ■ MAY 10 ELECTION

Kim, Shade trade barbs over donors

By Sarah Coppola AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Austin City Council Member Jennifer Kim is criticizing campaign opponent Randi Shade for accepting about \$20,000 in donations from people who support toll roads, the tax subsidies agreement for the upscale Domain shopping center and a Wal-Mart Supercenter planned for Northcross Mall. However, Kim accepted money from some of those donors in her 2005 campaign, and some of them say Kim also sought their support this year. The issues Kim is highlighting have been controversial in the May 10 City Council races. See RACE, B5

INSIDE More election coverage, B5.

SAN MARCOS ■ CITY GOVERNMENT



Rick Menchaca left Midland job.

By Andrea Lorenz AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

SAN MARCOS — City officials describe Rick Menchaca, their choice to fill the city manager's job, as a man of character. But some who worked with Menchaca in Midland, where he resigned as city manager

last year, were less flattering in their assessments. The City Council on Wednesday night voted unanimously to hire Menchaca, 43. He will be paid \$170,000 a year and will start today. The council picked Menchaca out of nine semifinalists, Mayor Susan Narvaiz

said. "Everyone saw someone that understands a community has different needs and has experience bringing all those needs to the stage," she said. Menchaca, who has a master's degree See HIRE, B6