

Shasteen-Exon battle rages on; Shasteen 'won't resign'

OMAHA (AP)—Republican Don Shasteen reneged Wednesday on his offer to resign from the U.S. Senate race if his allegations against Gov. J. J. Exon are not proven.

"I am not resigning under any circumstances," Shasteen told the Downtown Rotary Club in response to a question from a Rotarian.

Exon and Shasteen appeared together for the first time since Shasteen made his allegations nearly two weeks ago in Columbus. The candidates answered questions, many of which dealt with the federal government, inflation and agriculture.

As he was in their last meeting, Exon was visibly angered by Shasteen's allegations. He denied them again and read an affidavit he swore before a notary public saying that he had no part in his company's day-to-day business, nor had he brought pressure on any federal employees to do business with his firm.

Shasteen also backpedaled on his original allegations. At that time he charged that a letter sent by Exon's office equipment firm to ASCS officials soliciting business was franked, or sent illegally in government envelopes. He also indicated Exon's position as governor and 70 percent owner of the J. J. Exon Co. may have brought political pressure on banks that must seek charters to operate.

Shasteen Wednesday read the letter to Rotarians and said directors of firms are responsible for the company's management.

"The governor does have that responsibility and should know what goes on," Shasteen said. "This letter, and sending it, and political pressure implied is improper and shouldn't have been done."

In response to Shasteen's statement, Exon thundered: "I did not know of the ASCS letter. I have given a sworn affidavit to that effect. This mud-slinging continues. Your whole thrust is mudslinging. You have not one iota of proof."

When he first made the allegations in Columbus, Shasteen was asked by Exon if he would withdraw from the race if his charges are proved false.

The exchange, as recorded on tape, went like this. Exon: "I'll tell you what let's do; I'll open the books of my company, lay it all out on the line if — you agree that after those books are open, and your irresponsible charges are proven false as I am sure they will, you will agree to withdraw as the Republican candidate for the United States Senate and your party will nominate someone worthy of carrying the banner of that great party. Would you agree to do that?"

Shasteen: "If you will open your books . . ."

Exon: "Be careful now."

Shasteen: "If you will open your books to a group of these newsmen with appropriate accountants, I will meet that challenge."

Later in the same debate, Shasteen said he had thought it over and changed his mind, deciding it was not a good challenge to accept.

On Wednesday, Shasteen repeated that the letter was proof in itself that Exon's conduct was "improper and unethical."

Exon repeated his denials, pointing out that he, employees of the J.J. Exon Co. and two ASCS officials have sworn out affidavits denying improper conduct.

"He (Shasteen) has made no sworn statement," Exon said.

"He has brought only innuendos."

The exchange of hostilities regarding the letter aside, Rotary program chairman Bill Ramsey, who was given

a referee's shirt and whistle by fellow members before the debate began, called for other questions.

Both candidates said they favor tax credits or deductions for college or private secondary school tuition, with reservations. Exon said such credits should not interfere with the operation of public schools and Shasteen said the credits would add to the federal deficit.

Both said they were opposed to national health insurance, although Exon said he favored some sort of catastrophic illness insurance.

Both opposed the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, which would create federal jobs to lower unemployment.

Exon called it "one more grandiose spending scheme that wouldn't accomplish its end."

Shasteen called for stimulating the private sector, instead of increasing government's role.

The candidates also agreed to deregulating the price of natural gas.

Exon, however, said deregulation would have to be coupled with a mechanism to force oil and gas companies to "plow back money to more and better discoveries."

Epidemic cholera reported

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP)—The second and third suspected cases of epidemic cholera were reported Wednesday in south-central Louisiana. State officials said they were "very concerned" but did not believe there would be a widespread outbreak of the sometimes fatal disease.

Associated Press datelines

"We're not looking for an epidemic or a major outbreak" of the gastro-intestinal disease, said Dr. William Cherry, head of the Louisiana health department.

Cholera bacteria was found in the raw sewage of Abbeville recently after officials confirmed that a 44-year-old resident of that community had epidemic cholera. He has recovered.

Cherry said that was only the fourth case of epidemic cholera reported in the United States since an outbreak in 1911. The other major strain of cholera is an isolated disease, non-contagious and non-infectious.

The latest suspected cases are a 52-year-old Abbeville woman and an adult male in Kaplan. The woman was reported in serious condition Monday, but both are now recovering. The bacteria also was found in raw sewage in Kaplan on Tuesday.

The two small communities are about five miles apart in Vermilion Parish, 15 miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Don Berreth of the National Center for Disease Control in Atlanta said the cases were "unusual, but the danger in this country is not great."

Eight state investigators and two from the CDC were in the area trying to isolate the bacteria.

Cherry said the drinking water was uncontaminated in Abbeville, a city of about 11,000, and in Kaplan, which has a population of 5,500.

However, he added that the bacteria found in the sewage had to come from somewhere and "that's the problem."

Cholera is a painful disease found mainly in the tropics, where sanitation is poor and drinking water and food easily become contaminated.

Symptoms include severe diarrhea, vomiting, collapse and muscle cramps. It is usually transmitted by water or insects and seldom spread from person to person.

Berreth said with "appropriate treatment, about 99 percent" of cholera victims recover. At the turn of the century, the mortality rate ran between 30 percent and

80 percent. Many humans have a natural immunity to the disease.

St. Louis earthquake

ST. LOUIS (AP)—A small earthquake centered near St. Louis was felt as far north as Chicago and as far south as Louisiana, but caused only minor damage, authorities said Wednesday.

Sean T. Morrissey, technical director of the St. Louis University seismographic observatory, said the tremor measured 3.1 on the open-ended Richter scale. Preliminary reports from the university had estimated the quake at 3.5, but final official figures were revised downward, a spokesman said.

Morrissey described the tremor as a "small, shallow, local quake."

Otto W. Nuttli, professor of geophysics at St. Louis University, said the quake appeared to be centered about five miles southwest of the university's seismograph, which is located on the campus.

This would place the epicenter in south St. Louis County, he said, and would make the tremor the closest the university seismograph has recorded since it was set up in 1909.

Two north St. Louis County residents reported broken windows, another said her kitchen ceiling light fixture fell, and a water main burst in Alton, Ill., after the quake rumbled through the area at 7:24 a.m.

Both Nuttli and Morrissey said the cause of the quake could not be determined, but Morrissey said he was virtually certain it was not caused by movement along the celebrated New Madrid geologic fault, which runs through southern Missouri.

Nuttli said the disturbance may have been from either the St. Louis or Waterloo faults, both of which are under the metropolitan area, and have been regarded as inactive.

Deaths called mysterious

PEVELY, Mo. (AP)—Investigators searched for clues Wednesday to the mysterious death of a woman and the illness of her family, found semiconscious and suffering from seizures Tuesday in their home.

The victims appeared to have been overcome by gas or poison, authorities said, but a team of investigators working through the night ruled out methane and other gases commonly formed in sewer systems as causes.

Several police officers became ill after inspecting the Boyer home Tuesday and one was temporarily hospitalized.

Bonnie Boyer, 36, was found dead in a basement bedroom at the home by her mother, Eva Sims, who entered the home after telephoning all day without response.

Robert Boyer, 36, an Army recruiter, and their two children, Tanya, 16, and Barry, 12, were hospitalized, unable to tell authorities what made them ill.

About 40 families temporarily evacuated from the neighborhood as a precautionary measure were allowed to return Wednesday morning.

A team of Army epidemiologists and teams of toxicologists and pathologists were sent to investigate. By Wednesday they had reported no cause for the problem.

"Right now we don't know what the hell it is," said the Jefferson County coroner, Dr. James C. Rehm. "We had the place checked for any possible gas contamination and it was clean."

A classmate of Barry Boyer's told authorities the elder Boyer had spoken Monday of the family having a "contagious disease," Police Sgt. Harry White said.

The classmate and close neighbor, Randy Huskey, 13, said Barry had not been to class since last week, and had asked him to pick up his assignments for him.

Huskey said that about 4 p.m. Monday he went to the Boyer home to take Randy an assignment, but the elder Boyer came to the door and said Huskey should not come inside because the family "had something contagious."

Huskey said he went to the house again about 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, and Tanya told him her father had told the children not to see or speak to anyone.

The two Boyer children were listed in critical condition Wednesday in the intensive care unit at Cardinal Glennon Memorial Hospital in St. Louis, and Boyer was in serious condition at another St. Louis hospital.

An autopsy conducted on Mrs. Boyer's body showed no obvious cause of death, according to Dr. George Gantner Jr., St. Louis city and county medical examiner.

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