

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Woman, son tell of worship of devil in Battle Creek area

BATTLE CREEK — A 14-year-old Norfolk boy told an audience at a high school that he was part of a cult that sacrificed animals and "cast spells and curses."

Wayne Bloomquist said he was involved with a group of Satan worshipers who met at night near lakes and bridges and in a cemetery. Bloomquist said 100 to 150 people from the Norfolk, Madison and Pierce area make up the cult. Most are male, he said.

Advance word of Wednesday's presentation by Bloomquist and his mother, Anita, was spread through church bulletins, said Del Fuelberth, Battle Creek superintendent of schools. Clergy, teachers and school officials from the area made up the audience of 150 to 200 people. No students were present.

"I want to visit with the rest of the community people and see if this is something we want to put before the kids," Fuelberth told the Norfolk Daily News after listening to the Bloomquists. "I guess I'm still dubious."

When asked Thursday about the presentation, Madison County Sheriff Vern Hjorth said "there's no basis for it whatsoever." Hjorth said he knew of no reports of satanic cult activities, but

said the sheriff's department and Norfolk police would investigate claims made by the Bloomquists.

Bloomquist said satanic groups in the area have names such as the scorpions, the Devils and the Warlords. The youth said worship and black magic by the groups included a "communion" where members cut themselves and draw enough blood for each to drink. Cats, dogs and cattle were sacrificed, he said.

'I hope the beast inside me does not make me kill my mom, my dad, my brother and my sister.'

"We tried to raise spirits, like a seance, and cast spells and curses," he said.

Bloomquist said he is no longer involved with the group. Mrs. Bloomquist said her son was exorcised by a student at Nebraska Christian College in Norfolk and another man.

Bloomquist said his duty with the cult was to recruit young people. One tactic was pretending to have car trouble on a country road, then trying to lure youngsters who would stop by telling them to come to a party. He said members stole from family and friends and would "rob places" to raise money.

Mrs. Bloomquist said she became concerned when she found a copy of the Lord's Prayer while cleaning her son's bedroom that had its last line altered to read, "I hope the beast inside me does not make me kill my mom, my dad, my brother and my sister."

Mrs. Bloomquist said she became frightened when she walked into Wayne's empty room one morning, heard a scratching sound and saw a picture of Christ on the wall that was spattered with a red substance. The room was then padlocked, but "these things still continued," she said.

Asked by someone in the audience if she feared retribution from a cult member for telling her story, Mrs. Bloomquist replied: "Emotionally, you are not scared because you know you have Christ behind you."

Court holds handgun makers, sellers liable in criminal attacks

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — People who make or sell small, cheap handguns should know they are used mainly by criminals and therefore can be sued by victims shot in criminal attacks with the so-called Saturday Night Specials, Maryland's highest court ruled Thursday.

The unanimous Court of Appeals decision was the first in the nation to hold that the manufacturer or marketer of a handgun is liable for damages simply because the weapon is eventually used by a criminal to wound or kill.

The decision was hailed by gun foes as a major victory in their protracted battle to halt the sale of handguns in the United States. But National Rifle Association spokesman Dave Warner called the ruling a "very bad decision" that could deny a cheap self-defense weapon to people who can't afford expensive guns to protect themselves and their homes.

The ruling applies only to Saturday Night Specials and not to better quality, more expensive handguns. It also

applies only in Maryland, although spokesmen on both sides of the gun control issue said it could influence rulings in similar cases in other states.

The liability question reached the Court of Appeals in a case filed by Olen J. Kelley of Silver Spring, who was shot in a 1981 holdup of a supermarket in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

Kelley, who recovered from wounds in the chest and shoulder, sued Rolm Gesellschaft, a West German firm that designed and marketed the weapon that was used to shoot him.

Before considering Kelley's lawsuit, the U.S. District Court in Baltimore asked the state court for a ruling on whether the manufacturer could be held liable under Maryland law.

The 7-0 state opinion by Judge John C. Eldridge said that because of "cheap quality materials, poor manufacture, inaccuracy and unreliability," Saturday Night Specials are "virtually useless for the legitimate purposes of law enforcement, sport and protection of

persons, property and businesses."

The court said "the manufacturer or marketer of a Saturday Night Special knows or ought to know that he is making or selling a product principally to be used in criminal activity."

Josh Sugarman, a spokesman for the National Coalition to Ban Handguns, said the ruling creates "a whole new ball game for us" in trying to stop the production of handguns and trying "to force manufacturers... to pay the price of the havoc they are wreaking in this country."

Howard Siegel, Kelley's lawyer, said the ruling is an especially strong one because it requires a person bringing a suit to prove only that he was shot during a criminal act and that the weapon was a Saturday Night Special. At that point, there is automatic liability for the maker, distributor and retailer of the weapon, he said.

Siegel said he thinks the ruling could eventually halt the production and sale of Saturday Night Specials.

FBI studys drug connection in crash

ATLANTA — An airplane owner who died in a crash with 15 fellow parachutists was an "acquaintance" of a parachutist who plunged to his death in Tennessee last month while carrying a fortune in cocaine, the FBI said Thursday.

"How well acquainted they were, we do not know at this time," FBI agent Ed Horne said of David L. Williams, 35, of Atlanta, who died in his plane Sunday, and Andrew C. Thornton of Lexington, Ky.

Williams' plane had been grounded two days before the crash because of fuel contamination, and after the crash

sugar was found in its fuel, investigators said.

Thornton, 40, fell to his death in Knoxville, Tenn., when his main parachute failed to open and his reserve parachute didn't open properly. A duffel bag loaded with 75 pounds of cocaine, worth about \$20 million, was strapped to his waist.

In his pocket was a key bearing the serial number of a plane that crashed the same night 60 miles south of Knoxville, apparently on autopilot and with no one on board.

Shortly after Thornton's death,

authorities found a parachute and three duffel bags of cocaine hanging from a tree in Fannin County, Ga., near the Tennessee border.

This week, Butts County, Ga., authorities found a bag containing clothes, maps and books in a pond near the field where Williams' plane took off before crashing.

"In one of the books, it had the number on the wing, the fuselage, of the plane Thornton supposedly was in written over the diagram of one of the planes," Butts County Sheriff Billy Leverette said Thursday.

Newsmakers

A roundup of the day's happenings

Italy's Communist Party newspaper L'Unita began printing capitalist stock prices for the first time since its founding in 1924. Milan stock exchange closing prices were published this week in response to letters from hundreds of readers.

A Boston man has been fined for yelling racial slurs in a restaurant in what the prosecutor believes is the first conviction of a restaurant customer under a 1984 state law. Kenneth J. Tobin, 23, was convicted by a six-member Dedham District court jury of discrimination and disorderly conduct in 1984 in a Dedham restaurant. He was fined \$250 and placed on one-year probation.

At least 6,928 accidents involving toxic chemicals have occurred in the United States since 1980, killing 135

people and injuring nearly 1,500 others, according to a federal EPA study. The report found that about five accidents occur each day involving the release of toxic gases. Causes of the accidents ranged from human error to valve problems and failure in storage tank pressure.

Telling his fans, "This has been the greatest year of my life," blue-collar rocker Bruce Springsteen ended a 15-month world tour that brought his music to 5 million people. During his Los Angeles concert, Springsteen, 36, talked about his politics and encouraged his audience to donate money to his favorite local food bank charity and danced tenderly on stage with his wife, model Julianne Phillips, ending the encounter with a long kiss.

In Brief

2 laser tests successful, official says

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger disclosed Thursday the Pentagon conducted two successful "Star Wars" laser tests last month, including one that focused a laser beam on a fast, high-flying rocket.

Weinberger, in the course of offering a rousing defense of President Reagan's Star Wars initiative, made the disclosures during a speech to the Philadelphia World Affairs Council.

The Pentagon later released a brief statement elaborating on his remarks. It said one of the tests cited by the secretary marked the "first time a laser beam, adjusted for atmospheric distortion, has been propagated from the ground to space."

Besides that test, Weinberger also disclosed the Pentagon had duplicated "a week later" the Sept. 6 firing of a high-energy chemical laser against a Titan booster sitting on the ground. The Pentagon had announced the first test, which succeeded in blowing the booster apart, but had not disclosed the second.

Statistics: State lax in disciplining

LINCOLN — Statistics indicate that Nebraska apparently is one of the country's most lax states in disciplining doctors for professional errors. The statistics were compiled by and published in the *The York Times*.

State officials and a spokesman for the medical profession dispute that these statistics indicate that medical practices in Nebraska are poor or dangerous by comparison to other states. However, they agree Nebraska has a disciplinary system problem because the state agency responsible for policing the medical profession is underfunded and understaffed.

The Bureau of Examining Boards has 36 staff members to monitor the state's 2,330 doctors and 61,770 other health-related licenses or certificate holders, ranging from pharmacists to cosmetologists. Only four staff members are full-time field inspectors.

Locals hesitant to return money

Commissioners from Bed Willow and Madison counties have decided not to honor Gov. Bob Kerrey's request that local governments return 1.5 percent of state aid to help make up a projected shortfall in state revenues.

In McCook, Bed Willow Commissioner Wayne Michaelis said he thinks the state "has already docked southwest Nebraska enough."

Madison County commissioners passed a formal resolution declining the governor's request because of an already tight county budget.

If Madison County had complied with the request, county officials said they would have returned an estimated \$5,300.

Nebraska's state colleges are still considering whether to return 1.5 percent of state aid, said Pete Kotolopoulos, a member of the State College Board of Trustees.

He said he thinks the board may wait to see if Kerrey calls a special session to deal with the projected 1985 state revenue shortfall, estimated at around \$15 million.

Reagan doesn't object to Soviet offer

CINCINNATI — President Reagan raised no objections Thursday to the Soviet Union's proposal for separate arms talks with Britain and France but suggested the Kremlin was making an almost meaningless gesture by offering to cut back its medium-range missiles in Europe.

Reagan said the Soviets have not promised to destroy the medium-range missiles that are targeted on Europe, but simply have suggested moving them elsewhere.

Gorbachev's plan, unveiled in Paris, calls for a total ban on space weapons; a 50-percent reduction in strategic nuclear missiles; direct talks with France and Britain over their own nuclear arsenals, which contain about 150 missiles; and a pledge that the Soviet Union would begin unilaterally reducing medium-range SS-20 missiles to the June 1984 level of 243.

Asked if he thought Gorbachev was trying to drive a wedge between the allies with his proposals, Reagan replied, "Oh, I don't know whether they're trying to do that or not. It would be nice to hope that they may have gotten religion."

Fourth and last shuttle launched

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Atlantis joined America's space shuttle fleet Thursday with a dazzling liftoff on a mission of mystery, carrying five astronauts and a pair of military satellites built to withstand nuclear radiation.

Except for the launch, which could be seen from much of central Florida, the flight had as much secrecy as the Air Force could muster.

The Air Force said in advance there would be only two public reports about Atlantis unless problems developed. The first was a status report four hours into the flight; the other, a 24-hour notice that the shuttle will land at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

Atlantis' maiden flight, the 21st of the shuttle program, was the second all-Pentagon mission. A spy satellite was delivered to orbit on the first.

The U.S. shuttle fleet now stands at four: Atlantis, joining Columbia, Challenger and Discovery, is the last \$1.1 billion orbiter scheduled to be built. Enterprise, which was never intended to go into space, recently became a visitors' exhibit at Kennedy Space Center.

Officials against bathhouse closures

Shutting down massage parlors and gay bathhouses to block the spread of AIDS — as the House of Representatives authorized the surgeon general to do — would only force sex underground where it could be less closely monitored, many health officials and gay rights activists said Thursday.

"Our approach is not to close it down, but to influence the kind of behavior that goes on there. We feel that educating people is more helpful than driving them out into the streets, so to speak," said Dr. George Lamb, director of community health services in Boston, where there is one bathhouse catering to the city's homosexuals.

Gay rights activists complained the measure was discriminatory and said it was meaningless, since the surgeon general already has the power to act in a health emergency.