

Reynolds considers resigning from Congress

CHICAGO—Rep. Mel Reynolds is considering resigning from Congress as he faces a prison sentence for sexual misconduct and a continuing federal investigation of his finances.

Reynolds was convicted Tuesday of criminal sexual assault, which carries a mandatory minimum four-year sentence, for having sex with a former campaign worker when she was 16 and 17. He also was found guilty of

asking her to get him lewd photographs of a 15-year-old girl and trying to sabotage the investigation of the case.

Reynolds would not comment Wednesday and his attorneys did not return phone calls while preparing to appeal his case. Prosecutors want him jailed during the appeal process, but have not said what sentence they will seek.

The conviction does not automatically remove Reynolds from his House seat. But a Reynolds confidant said the congressman told him he will resign soon.

"He can hang on and try to weather an ethics committee investigation or inquiry, but he doesn't want to go through that," said Nate Clay, who said Reynolds called him several times Wednesday. "He didn't want to put

his family through that.

"He does not want to prolong the agony and the pain by fighting it out in Congress, so he's going to resign," Clay told The Associated Press.

Other observers questioned why Reynolds would be so quick to leave his \$133,600 yearly salary.

"I just don't know where he would get a job for \$11,000 a month and he's really got financial problems," said

Paul Green, a Governors State University political scientist. "My gut feeling would be he would stretch it out just as long as he can."

U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill., called on Reynolds to resign. Other politicians, including Democratic Mayor Richard M. Daley, Republican Gov. Jim Edgar and House Speaker Newt Gingrich said it was Reynolds' decision.

Jury selection begins for Menendez trial

LOS ANGELES—Jury selection for the retrial of Erik and Lyle Menendez started Wednesday, with prosecutors promising a more aggressive attack on the brothers' claim that lifelong abuse drove them to kill their millionaire parents.

A total of 181 people reported as potential jurors. Superior Court Judge Stanley Weisberg excused 86 for hardship reasons. Ninety-five will return for the next round of questioning.

The brothers reacted with surprise, when a man named Jose Menendez—their father's name—was excused for an unstated reason. The irony seemed to briefly brighten the pair, who smiled at their lawyers as the man left the courtroom. It was unclear if the man was related to the defendants.

Another group of potential jurors was scheduled to be screened on Thursday and a third batch next Wednesday.

Weisberg said he expected to have a jury selected by the end of September and that the trial could last six months.

Defense attorneys worry that heavy media coverage of the first trial will make it extremely difficult to choose a jury.

"It's ugly and it's scary, and I'm

concerned whether it's going to be fair," said Erik Menendez's attorney, Leslie Abramson.

Prosecutor David Conn disagreed.

"If jurors are directed to base their decisions on what they hear in the courtroom and put aside everything else they've heard about or know, they can render a fair verdict," he said.

Lyle, 27, and Erik, 24, are charged with the Aug. 20, 1989, murders of Jose and Kitty Menendez in the family's Beverly Hills mansion. The brothers eventually confessed, contending they shot their father, an entertainment executive, and their mother because they feared the two were going to kill them after years of sexual and mental abuse.

The brothers' first trial ended in January 1994, when jurors split over murder and lesser manslaughter charges.

Prosecutors, who are seeking the death penalty, plan to attack the defense contention that the brothers were terrorized by abuse.

Weisberg, who also presided over the first trial, has indicated he will limit the number of defense witnesses who testified during the first trial about the brothers' childhood.

Immigration officials storm L.A. sweatshops, arrest 55

LOS ANGELES—Immigration agents stormed three suspected underground sweatshops and took 55 people into custody on Wednesday.

The raids followed a nationally publicized sweep three weeks ago of a sweatshop in El Monte, where authorities discovered 72 Thai nationals imprisoned and forced to sew clothes for up to 150 hours a week.

Wednesday's raids at three Los Angeles buildings were prompted

by a tip that was made soon after the El Monte raid, said Richard K. Rogers, district director of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

"The tremendous publicity in the El Monte case has heightened public awareness about the problem," Rogers said.

All but three of those taken into custody Wednesday were illegal immigrants from Thailand, Mexico, Central America or South America, authorities said.

Officials say the premises seemed crowded and there were indications that the workers also lived there, but none seemed to have been held against their will.

INS officials believe that the Thai nationals were brought over to work in the sweatshops until they had repaid the cost of their passage, Rogers said.

The U.S. attorney's office and Department of Labor were investigating possible criminal violations, authorities said.

Judge raises bond for suspect

DETROIT—A magistrate on Wednesday increased bond to \$1 million cash for a man charged with murder in the drowning of a woman who was dragged from her car and attacked on a bridge.

A day earlier, Magistrate Kerry Leon Jackson set bond for Martell Welch, 19, at \$250,000, meaning Welch could have been freed if his family raised 10 percent or \$25,000.

In raising the bond, Jackson noted a statement from a witness identified as Welch's friend.

The witness said he saw Welch "punching and kicking (the victim) while she sat in her vehicle on the bridge ... pulling her from the vehicle and saying 'I'm gonna kill that bitch,' pulling her pants off as he drug her from the vehicle and ramming her head into the vehicle several times, picking her up and putting her over the retainer wall and saying 'I should throw this bitch over the bridge.'"

"What really, really bothered me is the degree to which the complainant witness was assaulted prior to

whether she jumped off the bridge or was thrown off the bridge," Jackson said.

Police say Deletha Word, 33, jumped to her death early Saturday from the Belle Isle bridge. Some of Word's family members have said they doubted she jumped because she didn't know how to swim.

Welch was charged Tuesday with second-degree murder and faces up to life in prison if convicted. He is accused of attacking Word after she hit his car twice on the Detroit River island.

Sociologists: Blue-collar voters unpredictable

WASHINGTON—Any presidential candidate who takes the nation's skilled blue-collar workers for granted is making a mistake, say three sociologists who study the influence of class on voting.

Employees in the building trades, workers who operate complicated equipment and anyone with a technical manual skill are members of the class that is least likely to stick to a party line, said Michael Hout, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

"Skilled blue-collar workers, once the bedrock of the Democratic coalition, are now up for grabs," he said.

Previous studies have led social scientists to conclude that class plays far less of a role in U.S. politics than it once did. But Hout and study co-authors Jeff Manza of Pennsylvania State University and Clem Brooks of Indiana University took a new look at the traditional division of American society into white-collar and blue-collar workers.

They released their findings Monday at the American Sociological Association's 1995 conference here.

"In the 1984, '88 and '92 presidential elections, class has re-emerged as a critical factor in presidential voting" and continues to be far more influential than gender, Hout said.

The study divides the population into six groups: professionals; managers and administrators; the self-employed; "routine" white-collar workers, such as retail sales, clerical and service employees; skilled blue-collar workers; and semiskilled and unskilled blue-collar workers.

Professionals have shown the most striking change in the study of presidential elections from 1948 to 1992, Hout said, moving from being more likely to vote Republican to more likely to vote Democratic.

"Professionals, who were the most Republican class in the 1950s, have now joined the unskilled blue-collar workers and the 'routine' white-collar workers—the so-called pink-collar

workers because of the concentration of women—in the Democratic coalition," Hout said.

Retail sales, service and clerical workers followed professionals, "moving from modest Republican support from 1948 to 1960, to indifference from 1964 to 1984, to supporting the Democrats in 1988 and 1992."

Managers have remained solidly Republican in every election except 1956, the researchers said. The self-employed had a similar pattern.

The voting habits of skilled blue-collar workers have been more volatile, however. They strongly supported President Carter, a Democrat, in 1976 and 1980, then moved back toward Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush in 1984 and 1988.

What seems to be driving the changes, Hout said, is a new emphasis on social issues—abortion, civil liberties, civil rights and gender equality—rather than economic ones.

News... in a Minute

Hart considering Senate run

DENVER—Gary Hart, the former Democratic presidential candidate and Colorado senator, said he is considering another run for the Senate.

Hart told the Rocky Mountain News and The Denver Post that he is considering a bid for retiring Republican Hank Brown's seat.

The 58-year-old Hart, who served in the Senate from 1975 to 1987, said at first he dismissed queries from friends after Brown announced his retirement last December.

"Then within the last month I began to get a round of calls from Colorado, Washington and other points saying, 'You've got to take it seriously,'" he said Tuesday.

While he is taking it more seriously, Hart, now an international trade lawyer based in Denver, said he has not made a decision about the 1996 election.

Some political observers said Hart would have to win over Democrats still upset with his 1988 campaign for president. He dropped out of the race after allegations that he had an extramarital affair.

Hagman critical after liver transplant

LOS ANGELES—Larry Hagman was in extremely critical condition Wednesday after getting a new liver and losing a few gallstones during a 15-hour operation.

"Mr. Hagman has done very well," said Dr. Leonard Makowka, director of the liver transplant program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. "I expect that he'll return and have a fully normal lifestyle."

The first 48 hours after the surgery, which began Tuesday night and ended around 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, are crucial to determining if his body rejects the donor organ, Makowka said.

Hagman, 63, the loathsome J.R. Ewing from the TV soap "Dallas" and the long-suffering astronaut on "I Dream of Jeannie," was diagnosed three years ago with cirrhosis of the liver, which he blamed on years of heavy drinking.

Makowka said the surgical team was surprised to find that Hagman's cirrhosis was much more advanced than believed. "We really did get the liver just in time," he said.

But a cancerous tumor in the liver was "completely dead" after a procedure earlier this month in which one of Hagman's arteries was short-circuited to prevent blood from feeding the tumor, Makowka said.

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