

# News Digest

Page 2 Daily Nebraskan Friday, February 2, 2001

## Six convicts caught after prison escape

The group, found west of Nashville, was planning on heading to Canada before police caught up with them.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DICKSON, Tenn. — Six escaped convicts from Alabama were captured in Tennessee on Thursday, two days after they broke out of a maximum-security prison by using a broom handle to lift an electrified fence.

Authorities stumbled onto the group along a country road about 50 miles west of Nashville and 165 miles from the prison.

They scattered and were caught without violence over an eight-hour span.

"We just partied, drank and got high — just had a good time," convicted burglar James McClain said after his arrest.

He said the group was headed to

Memphis and then planned to drive to Canada.

They had stopped near in the community of Bucksport, west of Dickson, to eat, clean themselves and rest.

There were three convicted murderers among the group and their escape prompted many in the region to lock their doors.

Authorities said two of the inmates beat and robbed the manager of a Georgia RV park on Wednesday. The manager was treated and released.

The six stopped at a gas station Wednesday not far from where they were found. Three went in and bought six bologna sandwiches, beer, toothpaste, toothbrushes and shampoo, authorities said.

"I heard somebody say six bologna sandwiches," clerk Betty Wallace said. "I thought it was Joe Stampley's (country music) band. They come here regularly."

Authorities said they found the group by luck.

Just after midnight, two sheriff's deputies, looking for someone who had stolen a street sign, came upon a car parked near a creek the convicts apparently were using to wash themselves.

Deputy Darrell Groves said the inmates "scattered like a bunch of deer" into the woods.

The deputies learned the car had been stolen near the Alabama prison and inside found a shotgun, an empty pistol holder, money and several makeshift knives.

The deputies called for help and caught the first three inmates around 6 a.m. with the help of a tracking dog.

"We ordered them to give up and they came out unarmed," police officer Bryan Johnson said. "We said, 'Who are you?' And, they said, 'You know who we are.'"

Two more convicts were found within an hour. Gary Scott eluded authorities for

another six-and-a-half hours before two residents spotted him crouched under a bridge.

"We told an FBI agent, went down the road a little piece and turned around, and by the time we got there, there were three state highway patrol cars there," said Benny Rumsey, one of the residents.

The inmates escaped Tuesday by slipping beneath an electric fence and two razor-wire fences at Alabama's St. Clair Correctional Facility, northeast of Birmingham, before guards noticed they were gone.

Prison commissioner Mike Haley has blamed the escape on a manpower shortage and faulty security, including an alarm system that didn't go off.

Captured were McClain, 35; Scott, 31; Billy Gamble, 24; Steve Murphy, 45; O.C. Borden, 33; and Jack Allred, 43.

Scott, Murphy and Borden were serving life sentences for murder.

World/Nation  
The Associated Press

### Australia

#### Teen-age girl caught in crush at Limp Bizkit concert dies

SYDNEY — A teen-age girl who suffered a heart attack while caught in a crush during a performance by U.S. rap-rock group Limp Bizkit died Wednesday, five days after the concert, a hospital spokesman said.

Six other people were hospitalized in the crush at a touring multi-band event called the Big Day Out, which drew a crowd of 55,000.

Limp Bizkit pulled out of its Australian tour after the crush last Friday and criticized concert organizers for providing inadequate security and safety measures, a claim organizers denied.

Organizers blamed Limp Bizkit's volatile fans, not a lack of planning, for the problems, saying in a statement that Limp Bizkit's performance was "of sufficient intensity to provoke unprecedented and ferocious crowd activity in front of the stage."

### Russia

#### U.S. millionaire scheduled to 'tour' Mir space station

MOSCOW — U.S. millionaire Dennis Tito, who hopes to be the first "space tourist," will fly to the International Space Station at the end of April, the Russian space agency said Tuesday.

Tito, 60, had concluded a multimillion-dollar deal with Russian space officials to visit the Mir space station, and has been in training for months with other would-be cosmonauts at Star City, outside Moscow. But his hopes were dashed when the Russian government decided to dump the 15-year-old orbiter in early March.

But now the Russian space agency has signed a new contract with Tito for the California businessman to hitch a ride to the International Space Station on a Russian Soyuz rocket, said Konstantin Kreidenko, a spokesman for the Russian Aerospace Agency.

Tito is to blast off on April 30 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan with two Russian cosmonauts.

His trip is expected to last for about 10 days, Kreidenko said.

### Illinois

#### Couple admits knowing twins were already adopted

CHICAGO — A British couple embroiled in an international dispute over twin girls said they knew when they adopted the youngsters that they had been taken from another couple.

In an interview aired Thursday on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," Alan and Judith Kilshaw said they hadn't known until they arrived in California that the girls had already been placed with Richard and Vickie Allen of San Bernardino, Calif.

But they went ahead with the adoption anyway because the birth mother made it clear she did not want the Allens to have the babies and because they feared the girls would be given to someone else, they said.

The Allens had paid Internet adoption broker Tina Johnson \$6,000 in adoption fees; the Kilshaws paid about \$12,000.

### New York

#### 'Puffy' bodyguard testifies rapper had no weapon

NEW YORK — A former corrections officer who moonlighted as a bodyguard for Sean "Puffy" Combs testified Wednesday that he had never once seen the rap impresario carry a weapon.

Prosecution witness Leonard Curtis Howard said he would never have associated himself with Combs if the defendant had carried a firearm.

"If he is going to carry an illegal firearm, there is no reason for me to be there," Howard said under cross-examination. "I'm not going to put my job in jeopardy for Mr. Combs."

## India rescuers end search for survivors

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BHUJ, India — Some international rescue teams made the wrenching decision Thursday to abandon the search for possible earthquake survivors, as a lack of coordination appeared to hamper the other task — feeding and housing the living and treating their wounds.

Aid was reaching many, but bundles of blankets, bags of rice and lentils, cartons of mineral water and other supplies were heaped outside the railway freight office in Ahmedabad, the main staging point for the relief effort and the commercial center of the western state of Gujarat, where the epicenter of the Jan. 26 quake was located.

"It's beginning to clog up the system because there is no coordination. In some cases you have people just throwing stuff off of trucks, and that is not a good way to distribute relief supplies," said Ken Maclean, the west India representative for Catholic Relief Services of Baltimore.

The numbers hint at what relief organizations face. So far, 14,241 bodies have been recovered, Gujarat officials said Thursday, estimating the final toll would reach 35,000. The full toll may never be known because many of the dead may have been cremated in remote villages or remain buried under flattened towns and cities.

More than 60,000 people were injured as chunks of concrete and stone rained down from collapsing buildings. About 600,000 people were left homeless.

Although it has released no official damage estimate, the central government announced a 2 percent income tax hike Thursday to help pay for relief and rebuilding after India's worst earthquake in 50 years.

The U.S. Geological Survey downgraded the quake's initial 7.9 magnitude measurement to 7.7, saying it was a normal adjustment as it examined additional data.

## Ashcroft voted attorney general

ASHCROFT from page 1

Vouching for the nominee's honesty and integrity, he brushed aside weeks of attacks by Democrats, including many of Ashcroft's former Senate colleagues. "I don't know that person" they're depicting, Lott said.

Democrats claimed a consolation prize, saying the 42 votes against the nomination would be enough to sustain a filibuster against future Bush administration nominations they deemed too conservative. The votes in opposition were the most against any attorney general in the nation's history.

"He's wrong on civil rights, wrong on a woman's right to choose, wrong on needed steps to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children," argued Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., who led the fight against confirmation. "And he's the wrong choice to be attorney general of the United States."

But the result was a victory for Ashcroft and the new president.

All 50 Senate Republicans and eight Democrats voted for confirmation of the former Missouri senator, whose long political career seemed over when he lost a re-election bid last November.

In a statement issued after his confirmation, Ashcroft pledged he would "confront injustice by leading a professional Justice Department that is free from politics, that is uncompromisingly fair."

All the votes in opposition came from Democrats. They included not only liberal stalwarts such as Kennedy, but also the roster of potential presidential contenders who would need support from women's groups and black voters to prosper in a 2004 campaign — Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, John Edwards of North Carolina, Evan Bayh of Indiana, John Kerry of Massachusetts and Joseph Biden of Delaware.

Sen. Jean Carnahan, D-Mo., opposed Ashcroft in her first high-profile vote since taking the seat her late husband won from Ashcroft last November. Ashcroft, she said, "was just too divisive for our country." Republicans bristled at the attacks.

"I have absolute, total, complete confidence that he is going to be one outstanding attorney general of the United States," said Don Nickles of Oklahoma, the GOP whip.

Even before the vote, Republican sources circulated the names of likely top-ranking officials in a Justice Department headed by Ashcroft. These included Larry D. Thompson as deputy attorney general, the number



Mark Wilson/Newsweek

U.S. Attorney General-elect John Ashcroft arrives at the U.S. Supreme Court to be sworn in Thursday in Washington, D.C.

## Ashcroft gets OK from Nelson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Sen. Ben Nelson was one of only eight Democrats to vote Thursday for the confirmation of John Ashcroft as attorney general.

The freshman senator said his vote was out of deference to President Bush's choice and because he found nothing to disqualify Ashcroft.

Many Democrats criticized Ashcroft's nomination. His critics accused him of distorting the records of Clinton administration nominees James Hormel, the first openly gay U.S. ambassador, and Ronnie White, a black Missouri Supreme Court judge whose chances at a federal judgeship

were scuttled by Ashcroft.

Nelson said he submitted a statement into the Senate record voicing concerns about Ashcroft's handling of the White nomination and his acceptance of an honorary degree from the ultra-conservative Bob Jones University in South Carolina.

However, Nelson said he does not believe those arguments should disqualify Ashcroft from serving as attorney general.

Nebraska's other senator, Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel, also voted to confirm Ashcroft. He said Ashcroft's critics distorted the facts about the former Missouri senator's record.

two spot in the agency, and Theodore Olsen as solicitor general, the lawyer who represents the administration before the Supreme Court.

Thompson, a black lawyer who was U.S. attorney in Atlanta during the Reagan administration, was a key adviser to Clarence Thomas during his bitterly fought confirmation as a Supreme Court justice in 1991.

Ashcroft's conservative views, including his opposition to abortion and gun control and his fight against a desegregation plan in St. Louis more than a decade ago, were never in doubt

during the confirmation battle.

In four days of hearings last month, the former state attorney general, governor and senator sought to reassure his critics, saying he would serve "all the people" and enforce the nation's laws despite his "personal preferences."

In particular, he pledged not to seek a Supreme Court reversal of a woman's right to abortion, said he would defend the constitutionality of gun controls he opposed in the Senate and said the civil rights division was of particular importance to him.

## Plan could give Californians relief

The measure will allow the state to buy power and sell it to customers of gas and electric companies.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — State lawmakers approved a \$10 billion plan Thursday aimed at keeping California's lights on while they try to fix the state's spiraling energy crisis.

Gov. Gray Davis was expected to sign the measure that allows the state to sign long-term contracts for up to a decade to buy power and sell it to customers of cash-strapped Southern California Edison and Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

The Assembly's 54-25 vote — cast after legislative leaders and Davis won over a Democratic holdout and two Republicans — came despite GOP protests that the bill will result in higher electricity rates. The bill failed to pass earlier Thursday.

The two utilities are California's largest and together serve nearly 9

million residential and business customers.

Forced by the state's 1996 deregulation law to sell their power plants, the companies say they've been pushed \$12.7 billion into debt by soaring wholesale electricity prices.

The law also includes rate caps that block them from recovering the higher costs from customers.

The state already has spent more than \$400 million since mid-January buying power for the utilities, which have been denied credit by suppliers.

The legislation lets the state spend up to \$500 million buying more electricity on the expensive spot market — where the state has been spending \$40 million to \$50 million a day — while reaching cheaper long-term deals with wholesalers.

Many lawmakers supported the bill reluctantly, using words such as "hate" to describe their feelings.

Several Republicans criticized a provision that will let the Public Utilities Commission raise electricity rates to repay the state for its power purchases.

### Weather

#### TODAY

Partly cloudy  
high 32, low 25

#### TOMORROW

Partly cloudy  
high 47, low 30

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