

THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT

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Polygamist Ranch Raid Ruled Unwarranted

AUSTIN — The Third Court of Appeals in Austin ruled May 22 that evidence was not strong enough to warrant a lower court's decision ordering the emergency removal of children from the Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints' Yearning for Zion Ranch near Eldorado in early April.

The ruling leaves the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and its subagencies, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and Child Protective Services to review the ruling and ponder the next move.

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, which brought the appeal on behalf of dozens of mothers of YFZ children, hailed the ruling.

The San Angelo-based court

of original jurisdiction ordered the state to take the children into custody because of suspected child abuse and forced marriages of minor girls. More than 400 of the children now reside in foster care.

Senate panel eyes YFZ costs

Costs related to the state's multiagency raid of the YFZ Ranch were the subject of a hearing by the state Senate Committee on Finance.

Committee chair Sen. Steve Ogden, R-College Station, called for a detailed accounting of the costs at the May 20 hearing.

Albert Hawkins, chief of the Health and Human Services Commission, estimated the cost of the multi-agency response at \$5.26 million.

Thomas Suehs, the agency's deputy executive commissioner, reported details such as \$2.4 million for goods and services, \$1.7 million for overtime costs, \$1.1 million for travel and \$1 million for buses.

As the specter of costs continued to rise during the hearing, Sen. Bob Deuell, R-Greenville, suggested that the state pursue the assets of the fathers of YFZ children.

Judge Ben Woodward, 119th state district court, said Schleicher County and Tom Green County do not have the money to fund the multitude of YFZ cases pending.

Woodward, who also serves as a local administrative judge for Tom Green County, told the committee he suspects a \$2.25 million estimate for legal costs is low and that it does not include hourly attorneys' fees. Some 300 lawyers presently involved will expect to be paid, he said.

Scott McCown, director of the Center for Public Policy Prior-

ities in Austin, expressed concern about adding to Child Protective Services' caseload. The agency is presently handling 30,000 clients, McCown said.

The Dallas Morning News reported May 19 the Health and Human Services Commission estimated it would cost Texas taxpayers \$21 million to care for the children over the next year.

Child custody status hearings began May 19 in the Tom Green County courthouse in San Angelo for families of children removed from the ranch.

The hearings are scheduled through June 5, with parents of the children, their attorneys and caseworkers with Child Protective Services present.

Meanwhile, on May 21, YFZ ranch gate guards turned away CPS workers who asked to search the facility after receiving notice that more children still may be living there.

Nuclear waste application is OK'd

On May 21, the Texas Com-

mission on Environmental Quality voted 2-1 to approve Dallas-based Waste Control Specialists LLC's application for a license to dispose low-level radioactive waste at an underground site in West Texas.

The disposal facility is to be located near the New Mexico border along Highway 176, about 30 miles west of the city of Andrews.

AG settles in Vioxx class action

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on May 20 reached a \$58 million settlement with Merck & Co. Inc. over the marketing of the prescription drug Vioxx.

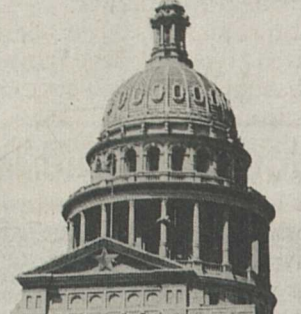
Merck pulled the drug from the market in 2004.

The settlement resolves a three-year investigation by 30 states that joined in a lawsuit against Merck for not adequately warning consumers of the health risks of the drug marketed as a painkiller and anti-inflammatory.

Texas' portion of the global agreed judgment will exceed \$4 million, Abbott's office said.

TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS
By Ed Sterling

New sales tax holiday debuts

Texas held its first-ever sales tax holiday for energy-efficient products on Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26.

The "Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday" applied to the purchase of air conditioners, ceiling fans, dishwashers, light bulbs, refrigerators, clothes washers, and other appliances.

Texas shoppers will get another break from state and local sales taxes Aug. 15-17 in the state's annual clothing sales tax holiday.

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Let's Look Back...

24 YEARS AGO

June 14, 1984
 Jerri Clipson of Eagle Lake was among 16 students at Southwest Texas State University to receive special recognition at the department of home economics annual spring awards banquet...

Navy Petty officer second class Andrew L. Hewitt, son of Isaac T. and Jewel Hewitt of Eagle Lake and Navy Petty officer third class Thomas E. Bartosh, son of Eugene R. Bartosh of East Bernard recently participated in the rescue of 35 vietnamese boat people in the South China Sea...
 Airman Darlene D. Lee,

daughter of Clara R. Lee and granddaughter of Abbie L. Adams both of Eagle Lake has completed Air Force basic training at Lackland Air Force...
 Virginia Janek, age 63, of Eagle Lake passed away Tuesday, May 29 at the Eagle Lake Community Hospital. Funeral services were held Friday, June 1 at 4 p.m. with Rev. Melburn Sibley officiating from the Dulany Funeral Home. Interment was held at Lakeside Cemetery...
 The Lissie United Methodist Church was the setting for the candlelight wedding uniting Miss

Rhonda Susan Gertson and Richard Paul Kramr in marriage at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 2...
 Debra and Terry Gant of Houston are proud to announce the birth of their first child, a girl, born May 15 at 7:37 p.m. at Hermann Hospital in Houston. Jermery Drunarness tipped the scales at five pounds, eight and one half ounces and measured 18 1/2 inches long...
 Mr. and Mrs. Abel Gonzales of Wharton are proud to announce the birth of their first child, a son, born June 1 at 1:11 p.m. at Gulf Coast Medical Center in Whar-

ton. Adam Wade weighed seven pounds, six ounces, and was 21 inches in length...
 Mr. and Mrs. John Konescheck are proud to announce the birth of a son, Jordan Charles, born Friday, June 1 in Eagle Lake Community Hospital. At birth he weighed nine pounds, seven ounces and two 22 inches long...
 Dr. Regina Gibson Kyles, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Otho Gibson of Houston and great niece of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Chavis of Eagle Lake received her Doctorate of Medicine degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston on May 26.

Colorado County Sheriff's Report

The Colorado County Sheriff's Department reported the following calls and cases for the period May 8.

Friday, April 25
 At 3:42 am, Deputy Gonzalez located an open window along with a suspicious vehicle parked at the Broadway Store on Hwy 71 west of Columbus. During the investigation, a subject was located inside the establishment attempting to steal beer, cigarettes, and snuff. After further investigation, Ashley Nicole Resendez, 18 of Columbus, was arrested for Burglary of a Building. Case closed.

Saturday, April 26
 At 8:15 am, Deputy Mieth responded to an abandoned vehicle on Hwy 71 about 1/2 mile north of Hwy 90A in Altair. After further investigation, the vehicle was removed from the location by Delgado's Wrecker Service. Case closed.

At 7:30 pm, Sgt. Pflughaupt conducted a traffic stop on FM 109 at Weido Loop north of Columbus. After further investigation, Felipe Neri Gonzales, 28 of Mexico, was arrested for Driving While Intoxicated. Case closed.

Sunday, April 27
 At 1:16 am, Deputy Zak conducted a traffic stop on Alleyton Road at IH-10 east of Columbus. After further investigation, Fabian Hernandez, 27 of Columbus, was arrested for No Driver's License and No Insurance. In addition, the passenger, Maria Bernardo-Ramirez, 26 of Columbus, was arrested for Public Intoxication. Case closed.

At 7 am, Deputy Butts responded to Frelsburg Road in reference to several damaged mailboxes. A report was taken from each complainant and the case is pending further investigation to identify the suspect(s).

At 12:26 pm, Deputy Mieth responded to a residence on Hwy 90 near Weimar in reference to a stolen truck and money. After further investigation, the incident was determined to be a civil matter. A report was filed and the case is closed.

At 6:55 pm, Deputy Zak responded to CR 253 near Weimar in reference to mailbox damage. A report was filed and the case is pending further investigation.

Monday, April 28
 At 7:30 am, Deputy Butts responded to a suspicious vehicle parked on Laura Lane west of Columbus. After further investigation, Ashley Nicole Resendez, 18 of Columbus, and Joshua Allen Smith, 18 of Beaumont, were both arrested for Public Intoxication. Case closed.

At 8 am, Sgt. Edman received an ignition key for a Volkswagen passenger car that was found at Beason's Park on Hwy 90 east of Columbus. Anyone who might have lost a key to a Volkswagen vehicle is asked to contact the Colorado County Sheriff's Office for more details. Case is pending return of key to owner.

At 11:15 am, Deputy Mieth responded to property on Dee Allen Road in reference to possible trespassing. The complainant believes that somebody has been coming onto the property without permission. Case is closed unless evidence of trespassing becomes available.

At 5:30 pm, Sgt. Pflughaupt met with a complainant from Alleyton in reference to Terroristic Threat. After further investigation, Ronald Ray Cockren Jr., 30 of Columbus, was arrested for Terroristic Threat. Case closed.

At 5:45 pm, Sgt. Pflughaupt met with a complainant on Cummins Creek Road in reference to Criminal Trespass and Reckless Damage or Destruction. After further investigation, the suspect was identified and the case was handled as a civil matter with no criminal charges pending. Case is closed.

Continued on page 9

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