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Arlington man killed by falling 5,000-pound metal plate

BY DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.
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EULESS -- An Arlington man was killed Tuesday night when a heavy steel plate that he was cleaning fell on him at a manufacturing plant, police said Wednesday.

No other injuries were reported.

Royce Bunkley, 53, was pronounced dead Tuesday night at Camtech Precision Manufacturing in the 1400 block of Westpark Way, according to the Tarrant County medical examiner's office. Bunkley died shortly after 9 p.m. Tuesday.

According to police reports, Bunkley was underneath the suspended 5,000-pound steel plate, cleaning it. At some point, the 13-foot long and 8-foot-wide plate fell on him, police said Wednesday.

Police had not determined what caused the plate to drop.

OSHA officials were scheduled to be on the scene today to investigate the accident, police said.

The Eules company was cited in 2007 for four safety violations, one of them classified as serious. The issues were resolved later that year, according to records of the Occupational and Safety Health Administration.

The Eules plant makes aircraft engines and engine parts, records show.

DOMINGO RAMIREZ, 817-390-7633

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TRTC to develop new public education outreach programs

By **LESLIE WIMMER**
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Local transportation officials and members of the Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition are developing new public education outreach efforts, and also are working to secure funds from a number of sources for various rail projects across North Texas.

Chair of the Coalition Ken Shetter said at the organization's Aug. 5 meeting that the group's public education committee is working on new campaigns to build interest on transportation issues expected to come up in the 2011 state legislative session. Specifically, the coalition is looking to work with area grassroots organizations and social networking Web sites, he said.

The new public education and outreach effort is intended to bolster support for legislative issues the coalition lobbied for through the 2009 session but did not pass the legislature, including the Texas Local Option Transportation Act. By starting outreach efforts this year, the coalition will have a time advantage in educating the public well before the 2011 session rolls

around, Shetter said.

"Every day we go [and] we do not move forward, we diminish that advantage, and we're definitely going to hit the ground running," Shetter said at the meeting.

Among the rail projects up for funding, from sources such as grants and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, are at-grade improvements to the congested Tower 55 rail yard at the intersection of Interstate 30 and Interstate 35-W. State transportation officials are vying for \$70 million in grant funds to help fund the construction of 9,000 new line feet of rail road tracks moving north and south of Tower 55.

The at-grade improvements are expected to increase travel time through the rail yard by about 40 percent, said Vic Suhm, executive director of the coalition.

Other projects include various Texas-based sections of a nationwide, high-speed rail network that would link Texas to other states, and position Fort Worth as a hub for high-speed rail travel, said Tom Shelton, a senior transportation planner with the North Central Texas Council of Governments. ■

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Eules to ask court to rehear Santeria animal sacrifice case

06:50 AM CDT on Monday, August 10, 2009

By DIANE JENNINGS / The Dallas Morning News
djennings@dallasnews.com

Eules plans to ask the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals to rehear the appeal of a man who the court said could sacrifice animals at his home.

The court's decision last week allowing animal sacrifice in Eules as part of a religious practice under the Texas Religious Freedom and Restoration Act could adversely affect cities across the state, associate city attorney William McKamie warned.

But attorneys defending religious freedom decried McKamie's reaction to the decision as "fear mongering."

The case, decided by a three-judge panel, involved the right of Jose Merced, an adherent of a Caribbean religion called Santeria, to slaughter four-legged animals such as goats and lambs, as well as other animals such as chickens and turtles, in his Eules home as part of religious ceremonies.

In 2008, a lower court found in favor of the city, but on July 31 the 5th Circuit sent the case back for further proceedings, urging Eules to develop a permit for Santeria practitioners.

McKamie said he will file a motion for rehearing by the full court.

"Cities will now have to evaluate the religious practices within their community," McKamie said.

"That's the effect of the ruling," he said. "That's why we're filing a motion for rehearing. Cities have no business evaluating the religious practices and whether that particular practice is burdensome or not. ... But that's apparently what the 5th Circuit is ordering the city to do."

But Eric Rassbach, attorney for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said McKamie is trying to whip up worries "because he wants to win his case."

"I don't think it's an issue for cities," Rassbach said, because complaints about the practice are few. "If it's not broke, why try and fix it? What is the problem that people are worried about?"

A couple of anonymous complaints in Eules brought the practice to light after Merced had been conducting the rituals for more than 15 years.

The 5th Circuit decision is "a great victory for people of all different religious faiths," Rassbach said, "because most faiths, at one point in their history or the other, have been unpopular. And I think we said in our brief that goat sacrifice is never going to be particularly popular in Eules, Texas but that's not the

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point. Religious liberty protections are only as good as they can be for the religions that need the help."

Douglas Laycock, a religious liberty expert at the University of Michigan School of Law, who consulted with Merced's attorneys, said Eules can ask for a rehearing before the full court, but he doubts it will do much good.

The Eules case was decided primarily on the basis of the Texas law, but in 1993 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in another Santeria case out of Florida that animal cruelty laws targeting religious sacrifice are unconstitutional.

Rassbach agreed, noting that the "the city of Hialeah, Florida, lost their case at the Supreme Court, and they've been doing Santeria in Hialeah ever since and it hasn't presented ongoing problems."

Merced did not return a call for comment.

But after the court's decision, he told The Associated Press, "Now Santeros can practice their religion at home without being afraid of being fined, arrested or taken to court."

At a glance: Animal sacrifice

Animal sacrifice has been used in nearly all the world's major religions at some time.

•The Old Testament is rife with references to the sacrifice of rams. Jews abandoned the ritual after the temple where sacrifices were performed was destroyed. The Torah commands that sacrifices must be done in a place commanded by God, and no sacrifice can take place until a new one is designated.

•Many Muslims commemorate the end of the Hajj by sacrificing a sheep in honor of Abraham's willingness to slay his son at God's commandment and God's providing of a ram instead. The holiday, known as Eid al-Adha, was celebrated last week.

•In Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus replaced animal sacrifice under the belief that Jesus was the Lamb of God and his ultimate sacrifice redeemed the world of its sins. This sacrifice is commemorated with communion.

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Eules Trinity, Utah team will play stadium opener

BY CARLOS MENDEZ

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ARLINGTON — The football teams of Eules Trinity and Bingham, Utah, have more in common than meets the eye. Not only are they matched in what will be the first high school game at Cowboys Stadium, they both do the Haka.

"We've been doing the Haka since 2005," Bingham coach David Peck said.

"We even talked about doing it together, but we couldn't quite get that worked out," Trinity coach Steve Lineweaver said with a smile as he spoke at a news conference Wednesday to promote the Kirk Herbstreit Varsity Football Series. Four games are scheduled on Labor Day at the new home of the Dallas Cowboys, beginning with the Trinity-Bingham game at 10:30 a.m. All the games will be televised by Fox Sports Net.

But even the Haka, the traditional war dance of the Maori tribe in New Zealand made popular by rugby and adopted by the Trojans' Tongan players, might take a back seat to the site of the game.

"No question — it was a 'wow,'" Peck said of his players' reaction when he told them they would not only be playing one of Texas' top teams, but in the new NFL stadium to boot. "We always tell our kids, 'If you want to get playing time, do something to make us go "wow." When I announced we were going to play Trinity, they went, 'wow.'"

The home-state Trojans are a bit star-struck, too.

"From our practice field, it's easy to see the top of the stadium," Lineweaver said. "The kids always look over there after they break up practice. They must be thinking, 'We're really going to play there?' They're very excited."

Bingham is a Utah power, and Peck said his team plays the same style of football as Trinity — physical and run-oriented. The team even has a player who attended Trinity as a ninth-grader, he said. But the game against the Trojans will be a proving ground, he said.

"We as coaches hear all the time about Texas high school football," he said. "It's kind of the standard of what it should be, and what our goals are. So when we had the chance to play a team from Texas, we jumped all over it. It's a bonus to be able to play at the new Cowboys Stadium. It's the chance of a lifetime. It's probably the biggest high school game a team from Utah has ever played because of that and the caliber of team we're playing.

"I just hope we're able to give them a game."

The other games match Colleyville Heritage against Irving MacArthur at 1:30, Mansfield Timberview vs. Mansfield Summit at 4:30 and Klein Oak against Sherman Oaks (Calif.) Notre Dame at 7:30.

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TODAY'S OBITUARIES

Richard E. Dawson

EULESS — Richard E. Dawson passed away in Round Rock on Monday, Aug. 10, 2009.

GRAVESIDE SERVICE: 1 p.m. Thursday in Bluebonnet Hills Memorial Park, Colleyville.

Richard was born in Slidell. He and his wife, Louise, resided in Euless for 50 years. He was a dedicated employee of 12 years with the city of Euless. Richard was well loved by everyone who knew him.

We will certainly miss him, but we know he is in the arms of God.

SURVIVORS: Wife, Louise; children, Leland and Deborah; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and many other family members whom he loved dearly.

Bluebonnet Hills Funeral Home
Colleyville, 817-498-5894

View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

Richard retired from the City of Euless in 1997.

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Live!

PEOPLE WATCH

Hernandez moves on

Cathy Hernandez, executive director of Fort Worth's Artes de la Rosa since 2003, will leave that post to become president of ArtsNet, the Arts Council for Northeast Tarrant County, in addition to becoming director of Texas Christian University's School of Arts Management. Hernandez's last day with Artes de la Rosa will be Aug. 28. Artes de la Rosa is the umbrella organization that runs Fort Worth's sole Hispanic theater company, Teatro de la Rosa, along with the historic Rose Marine Theater. During Hernandez's six years with Artes de la Rosa, the organization accumulated many local and national awards. Hernandez said, "Of course, I have mixed feelings," about leaving the organization. "I am sad to be leaving but also excited about the next prospects and because in my new position I'll still be close to home and that will always be important."

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NATIONAL POST

Animal sacrifices spark religious fight

Texas man wins court ruling upholding faith-based rights

Presented by



Mary Vallis, National Post



Irwin Thompson/The Dallas Morning News

Jose Merced seems like an average Texan: He has a good job with an airline, a house in a suburban cul-de-sac, three chihuahuas and strong religious faith.

It is what transpired in a bedroom attached to his garage, however, that piqued his neighbours' interest about five years ago. Police in Euless, a suburb of Fort Worth, received two anonymous calls warning that Mr. Merced, 46, was preparing to

slit a goat's throat.

When officers arrived at his door in 2004, they learned that for the past 16 years, Mr. Merced had been sacrificing more than goats -- ducks, chickens, doves and turtles had all been brought to his door, and killed at the same time in ceremonies for a little-known religion.

A Santeria priest, Mr. Merced sacrifices animals near his home-based shrine to honour deities called orishas. His religious practice is now at the centre of an ongoing court battle with Euless. The city insists Mr. Merced cannot kill animals within city limits. It is attempting to use public health, slaughterhouse and animal cruelty ordinances to stop him. The priest, in turn, fought back with a lawsuit.

With the help of lawyers from Washington, Mr. Merced argues that the city is infringing on his right to practice his faith, which originated in Cuba and combines elements of Roman Catholicism and western African tribal religions, court documents show.

The squabble over freedom of religion in the God-fearing state is now being watched closely by observers all over the world -- partly because of the fight over civil rights, but moreso because of the phrase "goat sacrifice," the priest's lawyers acknowledge. The case is perhaps best summed up by opening lines of Mr. Merced's appeals brief: "Goat sacrifice is never going to be popular in Texas. So it is not particularly surprising that the City of Euless wants to prohibit it."

Since the controversy began, Mr. Merced has received anonymous telephone calls demanding he move away. Strange cars circle his cul-de-sac; lurkers stare at his brick bungalow.

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"I don't know what they were expecting to see -- goats tied up in the trees or something?" Mr. Merced said in a telephone interview. "I didn't come out of a rocket, from the moon or from Mars. The religion exists."

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with Mr. Merced last week, reversing a lower court ruling. He is now in the clear to sacrifice animals in a ceremony to initiate a new priest, which he has

put off for years because of the case. The ceremony usually features the sacrifice of at least seven lambs or goats, 15 birds and a turtle, which are usually eaten a day after they are killed.

The city plans to file a request today for a new hearing before the appeals judges.

"He's claiming that his religious beliefs trump all state and local laws related to public health," said William Mc-Kamie, a lawyer for the city. "If he claims that his religious beliefs need him to have an elephant in his back yard ... then no one could stop that. The law is not designed to allow someone to be a law unto themselves, and that's what Mr. Merced is claiming-- that he gets to describe the law."

In their filings, Mr. Merced's lawyers hint at the irony of the case being fought in such a boldly religious state as Texas, where God-fearing citizens

fiercely protect their rights to free speech, bear arms and hunt wild game. Indeed, Mr. Merced's court filings note that Eules's ordinances are not uniformly applied, and make exceptions for the extermination of rodents; the euthanasia of stray animals and veterinary cases; and the hunting of wild hogs. Fishermen and hunters can eat their catches without inspection. To make exemptions on secular grounds while ignoring religious ones is not fair, his lawyers argue.

A police officer who visited Mr. Merced's home told him he should just go to the grocery store, according to documents filed in court. For practitioners of Santeria, the solution is not that simple -- nor is it as simple as making their sacrifices outside of city limits. There are only two Santeria temples in the world. Most priests practise their religion at shrines in their homes. They believe orishas live in the shrines, so sacrifices must be made to them there.

"Most religious beliefs have, at one time or another, or in one place or another, been the minority. and have been misunderstood by the greater society at large," said Eric Rassbach, a lawyer with The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which represented Mr. Merced. "Everyone who is an adherent to any kind of faith gains by protecting the minority religions that are out there among us."

Mr. McKamie acknowledges that his application for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to hear the case will likely be unsuccessful.

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THE RECESSION

With spending down, sales tax revenue takes big hit

The drop is expected to hurt
Tarrant County cities' budgets
and force them to make cuts.

Sales tax payments for August

All amounts in millions of dollars

	July 2009	July 2008	Pct. change
Arlington	8.14	8.37	-2.7
Bedford	1.00	0.94	+6.8
Dallas	20.34	23.80	-14.5
Euless	1.03	1.22	-15.2
Fort Worth	9.50	10.15	-6.3
Grapevine	2.98	3.20	-7.2
Hurst	1.30	1.44	-10.2
Mansfield	1.35	1.59	-14.9
Southlake	1.12	1.37	-17.9
Westlake	0.29	0.36	-19.7
Collin County	15.99	16.91	-5.4
Dallas County	46.42	49.45	-6.1
Denton County	7.86	8.73	-10.0
Tarrant County	36.46	39.10	-6.7

Source: Texas comptroller's office

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SEE IT IN THE STAR



These are the four young men who were recognized at our June 23 Council meeting.

Boy Scout Troop 161

Ryan Foley, 16, standing left, has earned his Eagle Scout rank. Foley, a member of Troop 161, chartered by First United Methodist Church of Euless, is a sophomore at Treetops School International in Euless. Foley has served in many leadership positions, including patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader and senior patrol leader, and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. He is the son of Karen and Albert Foley of Fort Worth and the grandson of Jean Fuller and the late Bob Fuller of Euless.

Patrick Lemoine, 17, standing right, has earned his Eagle Scout rank. Lemoine is a junior at Trinity High School in Euless. He has served in many leadership positions, including patrol leader, quartermaster and senior patrol leader, and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. Lemoine is the son of Patty Lemoine of Euless and the grandson of Pat and Bob King of Euless.

Brandon Foley, 17, seated left, has earned his Eagle Scout rank. Foley is a senior at Treetops School International in Euless. He has served in many leadership positions, including quartermaster, assistant senior patrol leader and troop guide, and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. Brandon is the son of Karen and Albert Foley of Fort Worth and the grandson of Jean Fuller and the late Bob Fuller of Euless.

Michael Halleck, 16, seated right, has earned his Eagle Scout rank. Halleck is a junior at Trinity High School in Euless. He has served in many leadership positions, including patrol leader, senior patrol leader and assistant senior patrol leader, and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. Halleck is the son of Charlotte and Richard Halleck of Euless and the grandson of Joan and George Godfrey of Denton.