

2-4-98

Two Trucks Crash On N.M. 4 Hill

By MARK HUMMELS
Journal Staff Writer

Two large-haul trucks crashed through a highway guard rail, plunged 200 feet into a ravine west of Los Alamos and caught fire Tuesday afternoon, police said.

One driver, Emileo Holguine, age unknown, of Albuquerque, was taken by ambulance to Los Alamos Medical Center where he was treated and released. The other, who was not identified, was airlifted to University Hospital in Albuquerque, said Los Alamos acting Police Chief Marla Brooks.

She did not release the second driver's name because the severity of his injuries was unknown Tuesday evening. There were no passengers in either truck, she said.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

The trucks were both traveling east on N.M. 4, going down a steep hill just before a hairpin turn, when they crashed through the guard rail near mile marker 49. The first report of the accident came about 12:10 p.m.

Both trucks were partially burned before Los Alamos County firefighters could extinguish the

flames.

The crash occurred on a stretch of road that was targeted in a recent study by the state Highway and Transportation Department at the request of Los Alamos County officials. The study found that only passenger vehicles were appropriate for the tight and twisting highway, which does not have size or weight restrictions for trucks.

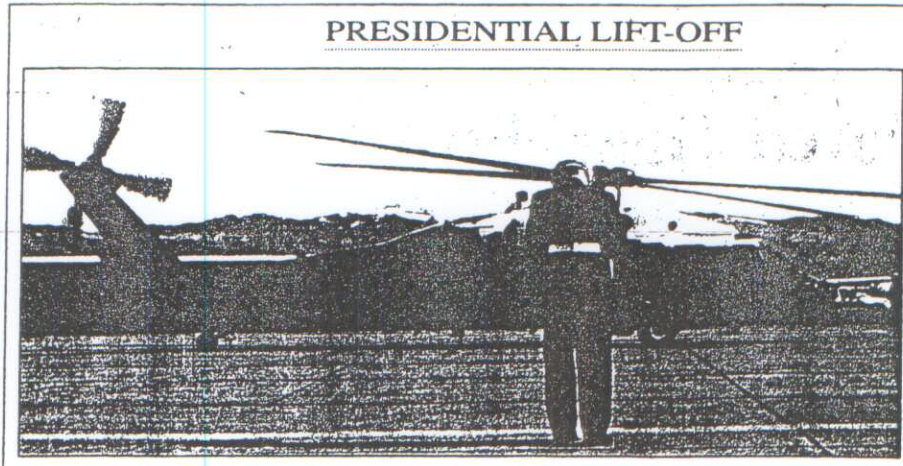
County residents have complained for years that commercial trucks, particularly mining trucks, are too big for the road.

Brooks said the trucks that crashed were carrying gravel for an Albuquerque company, Western Mobile.

Investigation of the wreck was hampered by the trucks' position at the bottom of a steep incline, she said.

Los Alamos police also were stretched thin Tuesday because of security measures taken for President Clinton's visit. The accident blocked traffic on the highway for a considerable time but did not have any impact on the president's visit, Brooks said.

Police continued to direct traffic at the crash site until after dark Tuesday night, a dispatcher said.



PRESIDENTIAL LIFT-OFF

President Bill Clinton's Marine 1 helicopter lifts off from Los Alamos airport on Tuesday while a Marine bows his head because of the gust of wind from the large helicopter.

JAIME DISNEY/JOURNAL

State Pen Escapee Recaptured Quickly

Helicopter Helps Track Fugitive

The Associated Press

SANTA FE — An inmate who escaped from a supervised work detail near the state penitentiary Tuesday was quickly recaptured after a helicopter pursuit.

Michael Tinkham, 34, was picked up by an accomplice in an old Ford pickup truck around 9 a.m. outside the prison near Santa Fe, Corrections Department officials said.

However, officers in a State Police helicopter spotted the pickup and followed it. They directed officers on the ground to an undeveloped area behind the Santa Fe Radisson Hotel.

Tinkham and the accomplice — identified as Jennifer Garcia — were arrested by State Police.

Tinkham had been serving a 10-year sentence for armed robbery and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. He was convicted in Santa Fe in 1989.



EDDIE MOORE/FOR THE JOURNAL

SHORT-LIVED ESCAPE: Michael Tinkham is escorted from the State Police office by State Police Officer David Capóll. Tinkham escaped from the Penitentiary of New Mexico near Santa Fe while working on a supervised work detail. He was gone for approximately one hour and 45 minutes before he was captured.



ALLEGED ACCOMPLICE: Jenn Garcia is escorted from the State Police office by State Police officers Wayne Shelton, center, Alfred Lovato, right. Garcia accused of helping Michael Tinkham escape from the Penitentiary of New Mexico while he was working on a supervised work detail near the prison.

State Police Captain Admits Vote Fraud

By S.U. MAHESH
Journal Staff Writer

A New Mexico State Police captain Tuesday admitted to participating in the March 1996 Española municipal elections, knowing that he didn't reside within that city's limits.

Capt. Chris Maes pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor voter fraud charges in a plea agreement reached with prosecutors.

State District Judge Jim Hall accepted the plea Tuesday and suspended a nearly two-year prison term against Maes, instead placing him on supervised probation for 728 days.

Hall also ordered the 20-year State Police veteran to perform 250 hours of community service and pay a monthly probation fee to be determined by the probation department.

Maes was one of 19 people indicted last June by a Rio Arriba County grand jury for alleged voter fraud in Española.

Maes was indicted on felony charges of ineligible absentee voting, false statement in absentee voting, false swearing, conspiracy to violate municipal election code and falsifying information on a certificate of registration, according to the indictment.

In the plea agreement, Maes pleaded guilty to one count each of attempted ineligible absentee voting and attempted falsifying information on a certificate of registration.

Assistant Attorney General Richard Klein told Hall that Maes cast an absentee ballot after registering as an Española resident.

Maes gave his home address as the State Police headquarters in

Española and when challenged by City Clerk Alice Lucero, he told her he lived at the headquarters, Klein said.

However, Maes lived outside the Española city limits during the March 1996 elections, Klein said.

When asked by Hall why he voted knowing he was ineligible, Maes said he worked in Española for 12 hours a day and felt a part of the community.

Former State Police Chief John Denko asked Hall to consider Maes' unblemished career record as a police officer.

"He (Maes) served with honor and distinction," Denko said. "I consider him very capable, capable to the point he can run the State Police."

State Police Internal Affairs and the state Law Enforcement Academy Board will review the case to determine whether Maes will stay on the force, Assistant Attorney General Dan Pearlman said. Maes is still employed by the department in Socorro.

Hall said he was convinced that Maes neither used his authority as a police officer to cast the vote nor had any personal interests in the elections.

"On a crime like this a police officer should be treated no better or no worse," the judge said.

Maes is the 11th person to plead to vote fraud charges since the June indictments. Three cases are pending, including that of David Chavez, a city councilor in Española and the Rio Arriba County clerk. Prosecutors dropped charges against three defendants, and two defendants were acquitted at trial.

Man Held in Death Of Mother-in-Law

Journal Staff Report

Police believe a Raton man strangled his mother-in-law at their Raton home, then fled south before being picked up Saturday morning by State Police near Las Cruces.

An arrest warrant issued Tuesday charges Augustine Granado, 24, a construction worker, with first-degree murder in connection with the strangling death of Laura Sepich, 54, who worked at a title service company, Raton Police Chief Vince Mares said Tuesday.

He said the warrant was under a District Court seal and he could not release a copy Tuesday. Police expect to arraign Granado on Thursday or Friday, he said.

Sepich was Granado's mother-in-law. She lived with Granado and his wife, Sepich's daughter, in Raton, Mares said.

"We don't have a motive at this time," he said.

Sepich was found strangled to death at home early Saturday morning. Police issued a statewide alert to look for Granado and the car he was driving, a 1990 Chevrolet Lumina that belonged to Sepich.

State Police in the Las Cruces dis-

Mares said. Before Saturday, Raton had not had a homicide since 1990.



PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT
BELINDA FOR MAYOR
Better Public Education
Create New WIFF Route
Human Rights • Welfare Programs
Environmental Concerns
Affordable Housing
Phone of Advertisement Paid for: The Committee to elect Belinda, South Valley Chamber
471-4959

ENCOURAGE YOUR KID'S HABIT.



NEW MEXICO

Group Claims Voter Fraud in Sandoval County

By John Vaeger

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

SANTA FE — Several Sandoval County residents called Thursday for a grand jury investigation of what they claimed is voter fraud in Sandoval County and the refusal of state officials to do anything about it.

The group said the addresses of hundreds of voters are listed only as post office boxes, making it difficult to determine in which precinct those voters live. Dozens of other names appear twice on voter lists, said Alan Merritt of Rio Rancho, the group's primary spokesman.

Merritt suggested several times during a news conference that some votes cast in the June primary election might have been cast on behalf of dead voters, but he offered no evidence of that.

"There is no way of knowing how many of these are tombstones," Merritt said of voters whose only address is a post office box. "We think quite a few of these live within the graveyards."

Horst Clifton, the director of the state's Bureau of Elections and one of the people Merritt is asking be investigated, said Merritt's allegations are overblown.

Voter rolls continue to list only post office boxes as addresses for many voters, but Clifton said the state is trying to correct that and it isn't any indication of vote fraud.

Clifton said flatly that vote fraud isn't a problem in New Mexico.

"No, we do not believe there is," Clifton said. "It's not quite as bad as they would like to imply... Most instances of names being listed twice on voter rolls or of the same Social Security numbers appearing more than once can be attributed to clerical errors. Merritt said he and a group called Citizens for Clean

Government would begin circulating a petition calling for a grand jury investigation of their allegations. The petition calls for an investigation of the actions of Clifton, Secretary of State Stephanie Gonzales and several Sandoval County officials and residents.

Sandoval County Clerk Sally Padilla said she hadn't seen the petition and declined to comment. County Commission Chairman Edmund "Joe" Lang said neither he nor the commission has anything to do with elections.

The state Bureau of Elections, headed by Clifton, is within the Secretary of State's Office.

Big Bucks Set Aside For N.M. U.S. Budget To Fund \$135 Million in Projects

By ANNE ANDERSON

New Mexico will receive more than \$135 million under two appropriations bills signed this week by President Bush any through federal housing grants.

Sen. Pete Domenici says the 1993 Interior Appropriations Bill includes more than \$65 million for New Mexico, the 1993 Military Construction Appropriations Bill has \$59.1 million for the state and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded the state \$109 million, said Domenici, R-N.M.

Most of the appropriations are subject to a 0.85 of 1 percent across-the-board reduction to bring the bill in line with the president's budget request. Domenici said in a statement from his Washington, D.C., office included in the measures and grants are:

- \$1 million for acquisition of up to 1,300 acres at the Oregon-Mountain Recreation Area
- \$9.2 million for construction of recreation facilities at the Oregon-Mountain Recreation Area
- \$350,000 for erosion control structures on the Rio Puerco
- \$500,000 for a research proposal to protect, enhance and manage the Rio Grande bosque
- \$6 million to buy land containing ancient petroglyphs on Albuquerque's West Mesa
- \$5 million to begin repairs at the Shiner-Lay Dam near Las Vegas
- \$1 million for construction at the Beaver National Fish Hatchery
- \$1.2 million for the Gallup Animal Cross Center
- \$528 million for continued construction of the Shiprock Hospital
- \$36 million for the Tom, Harkin, Clinic
- \$20 million to construct a water station at the El Vezquez National Conservation Area
- \$2 million for water resource protection in the Four Corners area
- \$10 million for capital and maintenance of National Park
- \$2 million for water and sewerage at El Paso, the El Paso County area



Peterson Zah says he'll celebrate Columbus Day because the explorer negated the strength of the Indian people — who still endure.

Navajo Leader To Celebrate Tribe's Survival

By Leslie Linthicum

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

WHEN the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing in the Americas is commemorated next Monday, Navajo Nation President Peterson Zah will be celebrating too.

"I'm going to be celebrating because I'm still here, because I'm still brown, because I still have my traditional beliefs," Zah said Thursday in Albuquerque. "I'm going to do things that my ancestors taught me."

The sailor from Genoa, whose misjudged attempt to find India

Delay

Zah spoke as part of a panel of Native American leaders reflecting on the effects of Columbus on their people. The panel was part of a two-day symposium on Columbus sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management.



While some Native Americans have proposed boycotting the traditional Columbus Day holiday or staging counter events, Zah said Columbus Day has long been an official holiday of the Navajo Nation. He said as president he decided to maintain the holiday on the tribal calendar but moved it to the day after Thanksgiving to give tribal employees a four-day holiday weekend.

This year, that holiday will become known as Navajo Family Day to