

METRO & STATE

Metropolitan briefing

CHICAGO

Girl, 14, is slain while baby-sitting

Police were searching Friday for any suspects in the slaying of a 14-year-old West Side girl who had been baby-sitting for two cousins.

Storie Delaney of the 300 block of West 9th Street was found at 8:15 p.m. Thursday in the dining room of an aunt's house at 3022 W. 81st St. with a gunshot wound to her chest, authorities said.

Officials said the girl had been baby-sitting two cousins, ages 3 years and 3 months. The children were not harmed.

The girl and her six siblings had been removed from their mother's custody in December 1986 by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and placed with a relative when a report to the agency's hot line stated the mother might pose a risk to her children, a DCF spokeswoman said.

Union leader clears 3-year inquiry

A three-year inquiry has ended without any findings or charges of corrupt practices against Edward T. Hanley, president of the Chicago-based Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, lawyers said Friday.

But the inquiry by a court-appointed monitor, key to an agreement reached with federal prosecutors in 1965 to purge mob influence from the ranks of the 80,000-member union, did bring about internal reforms, including adoption of an ethics code.

Under terms of the continuing agreement, the ethics code will be enforced by members of a Public Review Board chaired by former Illinois Gov. James R. Thompson.

City clerk's office buys defibrillator

City Clerk Jim Laski said Friday that his office would now be equipped with an "idiot-proof" defibrillator in case someone has a heart attack in his busy City Hall office.

Laski and members of his staff attended a class Friday to become certified in CPR and use of the \$3,500 defibrillator.

Laski said he decided to buy the defibrillator because it could take emergency medical personnel too long to respond if someone had a heart attack in City Hall.

Cop gets probation for resisting arrest

A Chicago police officer convicted of resisting arrest and stripped of his duties was sentenced Friday to 1 year of conditional discharge—a non-reporting type of probation—and ordered to serve 30 days in the Cook County Sheriff's Department's Work Alternative Program.

Eric Holder, an officer from the Harrison District, said nothing in court as Cook County Circuit Judge Marvin Luckman pronounced his sentence.

Holder also was prohibited from possessing any firearm or other dangerous weapon while serving the sentence.

Holder, an African American, was arrested July 10 and charged with misdemeanor battery and resisting arrest following a fight between him and white officers from the Austin District who had been called to investigate a shooting. Holder, an acquaintance of the shooting victim's, was off duty at the time.

In January, Holder was acquitted of the battery charges, but convicted of resisting arrest. He then was stripped of his police powers.

Holder's attorney, Corinth Bishop, said he plans to appeal.

CHICAGO AREA

ICC prefers overlay to split area codes

The state agency that regulates the telecommunications industry issued a proposed order Friday that tells phone companies they must work harder to conserve numbers in all five area codes in the Chicago region area codes and outlines a plan to do it.

Illinois Commerce Commission hearing examiners also proposed that when phone firms do run out of numbers—as the firms say they will in the 847 code by year's end—an 11-digit overlay, in which new customers would receive a different area code, is preferable to splitting existing area codes geographically.

A study by the Citizens Utility Board watchdog group asserts that carriers exaggerate the number shortage because they are using less than half the available phone numbers.

Baby's death spurs fraud charge against mom



Tribune photo by James F. Quinn

Before reporters Friday, U.S. Atty. Scott Lassar discusses the case against a Hickory Hills woman.

By Matt O'Connor
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Dina Abdelhaq defrauded banks, insurers, government welfare programs and even her mother's restaurant before she hit on a shocking new way to make a large sum of money, say federal prosecutors.

Eleven days after obtaining a \$200,000 life insurance policy on her newborn daughter, Tara, in 1986, Abdelhaq intentionally suffocated the 7-week-old baby, prosecutors charge, and then claimed the infant had died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

On Friday, the FBI arrested Abdelhaq, 33, on federal charges of insurance fraud in connection with Tara's death. U.S. Atty. Scott Lassar said at a news conference. She faces life imprisonment if convicted.

Prosecutors also disclosed that

15 months before Tara's death, another infant daughter of Abdelhaq's, Lena, 17 days old, was found dead in her crib. Cook County Medical Examiner Edmund Donoghue said Friday that the cause of Lena's death had been changed from SIDS to undetermined. Authorities said there was no evidence of an insurance policy on that child.

Allstate Life Insurance Co. refused to pay the claim for Tara's death and alerted police to its suspicions. In an Albatra lawsuit related to the claim refusal, Abdelhaq is described as unemployed, on public assistance and heavily in debt because of a gambling habit at the time of Tara's death.

Three days before Tara's birth, Abdelhaq was arrested on a deceptive practice charge. Police say she told them that she is a gambling addict who tried to get

money "any way," according to documents filed with the Cook County Circuit Court lawsuit.

At her initial hearing on the federal charges Friday, prosecutors Ronald Safer and Kathleen Murdock said they would not oppose Abdelhaq's release if she posted a substantial bond, refrained from gambling and underwent counseling. The hearing was continued until Monday.

Abdelhaq, 33, formerly of Alsip and now of Hickory Hills, is estranged from her husband, Omar, and has two older children living with their grandmother in Jordan, officials said.

With no incriminating forensic evidence, eyewitness testimony or a confession, state prosecutors would have a tough time proving a murder charge legal observers say. But if federal prosecutors can prove that the motive for the victim's death was financial and that

it fits into a pattern of fraudulent activity, a circumstantial case of insurance fraud and murder becomes stronger.

In recent years, according to the indictment, investigators say Abdelhaq engaged in three bank frauds, claimed phony injuries from accidents, illegally collected welfare and food stamps, and stole nearly \$2,500 from her mother's Oak Forest restaurant.

Authorities claim Abdelhaq concealed her pregnancy and Tara's birth from her doctor because she was planning the baby's death and didn't want to chance suspicion about a second SIDS case.

Knowing of Lena's death, a doctor at the hospital where Tara was delivered offered a free medical alert device used for babies deemed at risk. Prosecutors said, Abdelhaq declined the offer.

Tribune staff writer T. Shanon Taylor contributed to this report.



Rally for women: Marchers head from the Daley Center to the Kluwe/Federal Building on Friday in downtown Chicago to mark International Women's Day. Issues addressed during speeches included abortion rights and violence against women.

Burns tweaks Burris over 'patronage hiring'

By Jerry Thomas and Bob Kemper
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITERS

Democratic gubernatorial contender Jim Burns stepped up his criticism of rival Roland Burris on Friday, saying his record as U.S. attorney was better than Burris' "lackluster performance" as Illinois attorney general.

Burns cited a 1985 study conducted by the Chicago Council of Lawyers and the Fund for Justice in contending that the attorney general's office under Burris' watch was plagued with patronage hiring and that non-lawyers in the office were used for political rather than legal needs.

"Burris claims he is entitled to be governor because of his experience, but Illinois voters need to know the real Roland Burris record," Burns said.

Officials with Burris' campaign

did not return telephone calls to offer a response.

Daley dollars: U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley formally endorsed Democratic gubernatorial contender John Schmidt and keynoted a fundraising event at the Chicago Cultural Center that netted the candidate about \$75,000.

"I've known him for 30 years, and I think he'd make a great governor. I have strong feelings for him, personally," Daley said.

But Daley shied away from questions about whether his brother, Mayor Richard M. Daley, would endorse the candidate.

"(Schmidt) has been helpful to me, so I wanted to help him," William Daley said.

Stepping out: The two Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate—Comptroller Loretta Dickerson and state Sen. Peter Fitzgerald—dined out Thursday in the state Capitol, even though neither was there for the fight.

Dickerson was pushing a bill that would beef up collections of back taxes by posting the names of certain tax deadbeats on the Internet.

But the bill died in the Senate Revenue Committee, on which Fitzgerald sits, by a single vote.

Fitzgerald didn't vote on it but skipped the meeting to handle some campaign matters.

Fitzgerald's spokesman said the senator was not ducking the vote and contended it would have failed anyway, because it was a bad bill. But Dickerson, who was not there for the vote either, said Fitzgerald preaches against taxes

and then misses a chance to connect them by collecting money already owed the state.

Viewers may notice something peculiar at Saturday night's televised Democratic gubernatorial debate when the camera pans to U.S. Rep. Glenn Poshard. He won't be there and yet, he will. Poshard will be sitting about 300 miles south in the Benton Civic Center, where he will be holding his "roundup rally" for an anticipated 1,200 people.

Through the miracles of modern technology, and a measure of luck, Poshard will participate in the forum via satellite TV hookup to the NBC Tower from a quiet room at the civic center.

A scheduling problem forced Poshard to make the switch. The debate is to be broadcast at 6 p.m. on WMAQ-Ch. 5.

Governors State faculty, Wolff fail to connect with strike looming

By Jerry Thornton
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Faculty members at Governors State University in University Park said Friday that they were "surprised and saddened" that the school's president refused an offer to meet with negotiators in an effort to avert a strike.

"I sent (GSU) President Paula Wolff a letter asking her to meet with the negotiating teams and received a reply accepting the offer, but then got a phone call saying she would not attend," said Marsha Katz, president of the university's chapter of the University Professionals of Illinois.

Wolff said she refused the meeting because "I am not a member of the negotiating team and I have

not been a member." She said she hoped that the two negotiating teams could meet again before mediation hearings.

"Faculty members and members of the administration are trying to set up an open meeting next week where everyone can meet in a non-negotiating setting to honestly discuss the issues and set the record straight," Wolff said.

Faculty members voted last week to authorize a strike if talks failed and to seek a federal mediator after more than seven months of talks ended with no agreement.

Faculty members are asking for a two-year contract with a 3.5 percent salary increase the first year and a 5.5 percent increase the second year. The university said it can offer only 3 percent each year.

Woman held in plot to kill uncle

Ad allegedly used to try to hire hit men

By Darryl Campagna
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

The man who answered the woman's classified newspaper advertisement thought she was looking for a bodyguard for personal protection. Instead, she told him she wanted to hire him to kill someone.

The frightened applicant told the woman he wasn't interested, then went to police. Now Maria LaCour, 38, of 6118 W. Gunnison St. is being held in Cook County Jail without bond, facing a felony charge of solicitation to commit murder for hire. The alleged intended victim was her 69-year-old uncle, who told police he hadn't heard from his niece in nearly 15 years.

A Cook County sheriff's deputy and a Chicago Housing Authority officer posing as hit men who answered the ad arrested LaCour outside her home March 4 following a secretly tape-recorded meeting in which LaCour allegedly gave them a \$1,500 down payment on the \$2,500 murder and reiterated her intention that they kill her uncle.

She originally told the pair she thought they should kidnap her uncle, kill him and dispose of his body in Indiana, but later decided to let them determine how to carry out the murder, said Detective Sgt. Tom Keough of the Area 5 Violent Crimes Detective Division.

The North Side woman, an uncle by marriage to LaCour, was "very surprised" when police told him of the plot, Keough said. The man was not harmed. Keough declined to release his name.

LaCour told the undercover officers she wanted to kill her uncle to pay him back for bad treatment and physical abuse she said she endured from him when she moved to the United States from her native Poland many years earlier, Keough said.

LaCour did not say what type of abuse she suffered. She also did not elaborate on which other people she meant when she told the original respondent to the ad that she wanted "some people" killed, Keough said.

LaCour is being represented by the Cook County public defender's office. Patrick Gleason, the director of Chicago operations at the office, said his staff had few details on the case at this stage.

The advertisement in which LaCour sought a bodyguard for personal protection and to assist with errands ran in the Chicago Tribune in early November. LaCour listed her name and her West Gunnison Street address in the billing records.

St. Ignatius seeks to address problems

Embattled president apologizes for memo

By Dave Newbart
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

As some faculty leaders at St. Ignatius College Prep said they would move forward on a non-confidence vote on the school's president, school officials Friday acknowledged the need to address problems at the school and the president issued an apology for the wording of a memo he wrote about the faculty.

Leaders of the 65-member St. Ignatius Teachers' Association are finalizing a position paper to accompany the non-confidence vote

that could take place as early as next week, said Marty Kelley, a social studies teacher and past president of the association.

The dissident teachers at the highly selective school on the city's Near South Side have complained that Rev. Donald Rowe, a Jesuit priest who has led the school since 1981, has bowed to the demands of wealthy donors at the expense of academic programs and the spiritual mission of the school.

If the teachers do vote a lack of confidence in Rowe, the results would have no formal impact on his job security. But the vote would serve as a powerful rebuke to a man who has overseen major growth at the school's campus on 1076 W. Roosevelt Rd., said sup-

porters of a vote.

St. Ignatius spokesman Paul Pace said Friday that Rowe hoped to meet directly with faculty members about their complaints, acknowledging "There are issues out there that we know need to be addressed."

Rowe also backtracked on an internal memo he wrote in the summer of 1996, in which he suggested the school "disfranchise" itself from a major part of the veterans' area.

The memo was circulated among the full faculty last week for the first time.

"I apologize for the wording of the overdramatic personal memo to the other administrators that was distributed last week," Rowe told faculty. "It was intended as a loud internal gripe on a bad day."

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Gone fishin'

The arrival of coho salmon season has area anglers flocking to Lake Michigan. Here, Steve Bogda, who moved to Chicago from Poland, tests his luck near North Avenue.

Tribune photo by Phil Greer