

Law doesn't stop child 'stalkers'



NORTHWEST

INDEPENDENCE (AP) — The man first saw Crystal Peterson up close when she was seven, as she went door-to-door for a charity.

Later came the letters informing the girl he wanted to marry her and run away with her.

"They said things like, 'If I can't have her, nobody can have her,' and 'We're going to be in heaven some day,'" said Crystal's father, Chris.

The girl, now 11, and her parents would like never to see Robert Coker again. But they fear they will when he's released from prison.

In Portland, a 12-year-old girl was hounded by a man who sent her letters and audio tapes, saying they would marry and she would give him "all the money in the world."

Such "stalkers" can't be stopped legally under current Oregon law, said Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem.

"The crime of menacing requires a threat of bodily harm," he said. "Just scaring someone is not enough."

Mark Heslinga, a deputy Polk County district attorney who has dealt with Coker's case, said a law is needed to deal with harassing behavior "that has gone beyond the point of tolerance."

Crystal's father said Coker sent 20 to 30 letters to his daughter over a six-month period in 1991. The family at first didn't know who was sending them, but it was obvious the stalker lived nearby.

"He knew everything, when we went to work,

when we came home," Peterson said. "He said once he didn't like Crystal playing with the boy up the street."

Peterson said his wife, Debbie, eventually spotted Coker at night leaving a letter at their house. Coker lived across the street.

Police couldn't help until Coker was arrested for burglarizing the Peterson house while the family was on vacation. Authorities said he called the girl's grandmother from the house and told her he and Crystal would be together in heaven.

Coker admitted the crime in signing a diversion agreement that kept him out of jail if he made no contact with the girl. He violated the agreement by writing a letter to her, and he was sent to prison for 16 months.

Coker is due to be released from Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem Jan. 31. Peterson assumes Coker will return to Independence.

He said it took Crystal months to cope with her fright over the situation.

"The first few months she was really scared about going to bed; then it tapered off," he said. "She's not so scared now, but it keeps coming back at times. Kids at school throw it back in her face sometimes."

And he said the family feels helpless.

When the Legislature convenes in January, Mannix said, he hopes to win approval of a measure dealing clearly and strongly with such harassment.

Police: Victims of hate crimes need anonymity

SALEM (AP) — Many hate crimes against homosexuals aren't reported because victims fear being publicly identified, Portland Police Chief Tom Potter told a legislative panel Monday.

Potter said he might ask the Oregon Legislature to exempt victims' names from public records laws to encourage more crime reporting.

The Senate Interim Judiciary Committee heard from police authorities on trends in incidents of hate crimes. Those are generally crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, color, national origin, religion or sexual orientation.

Potter told lawmakers when his agency set up a "homophobic hot line" by which people could informally give reports about crimes against homosexuals, the line received more calls than regular police lines.

People reporting sexual orientation crimes fear being victimized twice by possibly losing a job or other repercussions if they are identified as being gay, he said.

"I think you would see reports skyrocket" if victims were assured their names couldn't be publicly disclosed, Potter said.

Potter and other police officials told the committee the Measure 9 anti-homosexual proposition on next Tuesday's general election ballot has raised anxiety levels.

"It has created a real climate of fear in our community," he said. "I have really felt a tremendous increase in tension."

Ron Louie, Hillsboro police chief, said police agencies for several years have predicted more crime based on racial and ethnic prejudice as non-white populations increase.

Bush officials won't testify on Iraq aid



NATIONAL

WASHINGTON (AP) - Bush officials are declining to testify before Congress on the politically charged issue of U.S. technology exports to Iraq before the Gulf War.

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and former Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher have ignored invitations from the Senate Banking Committee to appear as witnesses at a hearing Tuesday.

Neither Scowcroft nor Mosbacher has responded to the banking committee's request, a committee aide said Monday afternoon. Although the two have not formally replied, their associates have told the committee they almost certainly will not appear, said the aide, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In a related development Monday, Attorney General William Barr named J. Wil-

liam Roberts, a federal prosecutor in Illinois, to head a task force helping investigate \$5 billion in illegal loans to Iraq made by the Atlanta office of an Italian bank.

And in Atlanta, the Entrade trading company was fined \$1 million Monday after pleading guilty to giving kickbacks to the Atlanta branch manager in return for getting business with Iraq.

"As a matter of long-standing precedent, the national security adviser does not testify on (Capitol) Hill," Scowcroft spokesman Walter Kansteiner said Monday.

He said Scowcroft cannot appear because he is a personal adviser to President Bush. The administration invoked this executive privilege argument earlier this year when it turned down similar requests from the House Banking and Judiciary committees for Scowcroft to testify.

Losses force GM chairman to resign

DETROIT (AP) — Robert Stempel resigned under pressure as General Motors Corp. chairman Monday, ending a two-year-old command that failed to stop record financial bleeding at the world's largest automaker.

Stempel's departure makes his tenure the shortest of any of the 11 men who have chaired GM, once one of the most profitable and admired American businesses.

His job future had looked increasingly bleak in recent weeks, contributing to a sense of disarray and anxiety among many of GM's workers and managers.

Published reports quoting unidentified GM board sources said he would be asked to resign because he was moving too slowly in cutting costs to stop devastating financial losses.

"I could not in good conscience continue to watch the effects of rumors and speculation that have undermined and slowed the efforts of General Motors people to make this a stronger, more efficient, effective organization," Stempel said in a statement.

The 59-year-old automotive

'The question of executive leadership is a primary concern.'

— John Smale, GM chairman of board's executive committee

engineer had kept a low profile since Wednesday, when he angrily denied the board was trying to evict him from the company he joined in 1958.

But a statement Thursday from John Smale, chairman of the board's executive committee, amounted to a no-confidence vote. Smale said no management changes had been made, but, "The question of executive leadership is a primary concern."

Smale, 65, former chairman of Procter & Gamble Co., is expected to be named interim chairman when the GM board meets Nov. 2 in New York.

Smale said in a statement Monday the board had accepted Stempel's resignation and asked Stempel to continue as chairman until a successor is

named. Stempel said he would comply.

GM stock closed at \$34.12 1/2, up 62 1/2 cents.

Wall Street analysts weren't surprised Stempel resigned rather than wait to be fired. But no one interviewed felt a new chairman would make much difference in the 84-year-old automaker's attempts to regain the competitive edge.

GM's core auto business in North America has been hammered during the recession, which began about the time Stempel succeeded Chairman Roger Smith in August 1990.

"I sympathize with the lack of patience of the board of directors," said Mike Flynn, associate director of the Office for the Study of Automotive Transportation at the University of Michigan. "But I'm not sure they're right. A lot of GM's problems are traceable to the economy. I don't think Stempel's had a whole lot of time."

Under GM's highly publicized plan to shrink, the company will close 21 plants and cut 74,000 jobs by 1995. Analysts said that strategy must remain on track regardless what happens in the boardroom.

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