

Filmmaker produces his sister's wedding

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — Emmy-winning documentary filmmaker Gary Weimberg found himself directing, casting and starring in his sister's wedding when the out-of-town rabbi was a no-show.

The San Francisco filmmaker found himself in charge Sunday when it seemed there would be no one to officiate at the marriage of his sister, Marcie Ann Weimberg, to Adrian Reid Romano before 150 guests at Temple Beth El.

The rabbi apparently mistook the hour of the event, family members said.

"I think you could say we were completely upset," the bride said. "All of a sudden I thought, 'Let's get Gary!' It was just a case of turning a potential disaster into a wonderful thing."

The idea "seemed pretty wild. But I had always wanted to be a rabbi. So, I said, 'All right, why not?'" said Weimberg, who won a 1988 editing award for *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* and a technical Emmy last year for *Earth and the American Dream*, both HBO productions.

To make the marriage legal, the Rev. James Washington, a Christian Methodist minister who happened by, added a civil ceremony to the ritual led by Weimberg.

"Reverend Washington and I now pronounce you man and wife," Weimberg said. Added Washington: "I think we could all say that God works in mysterious ways."

Informed consent issue goes to Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stricter controls are needed to ensure Americans don't become guinea pigs when they're wheeled into hospital emergency rooms or become mentally ill, patients and ethics experts told Congress on Monday.

At issue is the provision of informed consent — fully telling patients the risks of scientific research. The government contends the process usually works well.

But witnesses told a congressional hearing Monday that doctors abuse a special rule that allows them to waive informed consent to save lives during emergencies. And they contended the mentally ill are especially vulnerable to doctors who simply don't follow the law.

"The system does not protect human subjects. It protects the researchers," said Gregory Allier of Los Angeles, a schizophrenic who contends a University of California study abused dozens of patients.

Witnesses told the House Small Business subcommittee on regulation that:

- UCLA didn't properly explain to schizophrenics that stopping their medication in a study on relapse rates put them at risk of psychotic episodes. Allier said he didn't get his medicine back even after he attacked his mother with a knife and began hitchhiking to Washington to assassinate then-President Bush. The government ordered UCLA to revise its consent form, but the hospital says patients weren't mistreated.

- Five hospitals sidestepped standard car-

diopulmonary resuscitation and substituted an experimental chest pump for heart attack victims who physically couldn't consent. The CardioPump's inventor, Dr. Keith Lurie of the University of Minnesota, says it could double survival rates. But the Food and Drug Administration halted the tests, calling them improperly designed, and ordered Lurie to get prospective consent, by asking heart patients in advance if they would consent to such treatment during a heart attack.

- Rhode Island Hospital detained drunken patients without consent for eight hours, sometimes tying them to stretchers, to draw blood to measure alcohol-induced glucose fluctuation. Also, a critic said an emergency room study of asthma attacks endangered children by requiring an asthma expert to see a child before treatment starts. The hospital says children having severe attacks are immediately treated and excluded from the study, and that drunken patients were routinely detained for blood tests before the glucose study.

Critics said the government doesn't enforce research rules — which themselves are confusing.

The FDA says consent may be waived when an experimental product could save someone who physically can't consent. The National Institutes of Health says experiments must pose only minimal risks. Hospitals are left to decide which standard they want to follow.

Ethics experts called on the government to

establish a national ethics committee to guide hospitals, or audit doctors frequently to ensure they're following the rules.

"We don't want moral priggishness to stand in the way of research," said Dr. Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania. "But we have to beef up our oversight."

"I'm very attracted to this idea," said Rep. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., chairman of the subcommittee. "Federal regulators must provide a stronger safety net."

He called on the FDA and NIH to speed up a review of their guidelines to clear up confusion.

But, said the NIH's Dr. Gary Ellis: "Health research subjects have never been more well protected than they are at this moment."

And companies said tighter controls could put them — and life-saving research — out of business.

Jeffrey Koepsell, president of CardioLogic Systems Inc., has spent \$2.5 million developing another CPR alternative, a vest that squeezes the chest. FDA says Koepsell must get prospective consent before testing it. That could take years even if hospitals agree, and they fear discussing the experiment would just scare patients, he testified.

If FDA doesn't allow a waiver, "we will be out of business in a year," he said.

"Patient rights must come first," Wyden responded. "But it's got to be possible for a small company to get products on the market ... without this bureaucratic water torture."

Four Muslims face life in prison for bombing

NEW YORK (AP) — Four Muslim fundamentalists face up to life in prison without parole when they are sentenced Tuesday for bombing the World Trade Center.

In a sentencing memorandum to the judge that was made public Monday, prosecutors asked "that each defendant is imprisoned for the rest of his life" for the Feb. 26, 1993, attack that killed six people and injured 1,000.

In a recent telephone interview, one of the defendants insisted he was innocent, but said he expects U.S. District Judge Kevin Duffy to impose the harshest penalty allowable.

"I believe we will all get life without parole," Ahmad Ajaj, 28, said from his cell at the U.S. Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa.

But he added: "I believe if there is justice I will win in the appeal."

The other three who will be sentenced Tuesday are Mohammad Salameh, 26, of Jersey City, N.J.; Mahmud Abouhalima, 34, of Woodbridge, N.J.; and Nidal Ayyad, 26, of Maplewood, N.J.

The defendants are expected to make statements to the judge before being sentenced. Also expected to speak is Ed Smith, the husband of one of the six victims.

The jury that decided the case on March 4 heard evidence that Salameh rented the storage locker where bomb ingredients were stored as well as the van that carried the bomb into the trade center.

It also heard evidence that Abouhalima helped build the bomb, and that Ayyad ordered some of the chemicals for the bomb and claimed responsibility for the attack in a letter sent to *The New York Times*.

Another trial is scheduled to begin in September for 15 men charged with planning a series of terrorism attacks in the United States.

Prosecutors say the defendants in the second case planned to bomb the United Nations, a federal building housing the FBI, and two tunnels and a bridge that connect New Jersey to Manhattan.

Clinton administration lends Ukraine support

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stepping into a boiling dispute, Secretary of State Warren Christopher told Ukraine on Monday that it has the support of the Clinton administration in trying to maintain control of the strategic Black Sea peninsula of Crimea.

"The territorial integrity of Ukraine within its present borders is something that the United States has consistently affirmed," said the State Department spokesman, Michael McCurry.

Christopher assured Foreign Minister Anatoliy Zlenko of the U.S. position in a letter delivered Monday, the U.S. official said.

McCurry also stressed that an agreement President Clinton

reached with Ukraine's president, Leonid M. Kravchuk, in Moscow in January guarantees Ukraine's security. The agreement, signed also by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, was tied to Ukraine's commitment to dismantle its arsenal of long-range nuclear missiles.

"The secretary recognized the responsible and conciliatory approach that Ukraine has adopted in dealing with developments in Crimea thus far and urged the Ukrainian government to continue to exercise restraint," McCurry said.

The State Department considers moves by Crimean legislators to loosen the peninsula's ties to Ukraine to be unconstitutional while Russia has reaffirmed its

commitment to Ukraine's territorial integrity, he added.

The United States and Russia provided the guarantees to help persuade Ukraine to give up all the nuclear weapons deployed on its soil by the Soviet Union.

At least one-third of those missiles have been dismantled and the parts sent to Russia, McCurry said.

The Crimean parliament has voted for equal status for Crimea and Ukraine and for separate Crimean citizenship for the largely Russian population on the peninsula, as well as for a local defense force.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei V. Kozyrev, warning that the dispute could lead to the

kind of conflict that ensued after Yugoslavia's disintegration, has said he has no doubt Crimea should be part of Ukraine.

The peninsula was part of Russia until 1974. It has a population of 2.7 million, about 70 percent of which is Russian.

Crimean and Ukrainian leaders on Sunday accused each other of stockpiling weapons and preparing to battle for control of the peninsula.

An adviser to Kravchuk warned that Crimea was on the verge of a civil war, and the ITAR-Tass news agency said 29 Ukrainian armored personnel carriers rumbled into Simferopol, the Crimean capital, on Sunday night.

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