

Illinois governor apologizes to families

John Keilman
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

CHICAGO — Illinois Gov. George Ryan said he unintentionally misled the families and friends of those slain by Death Row murderers when he told them he was leaning away from a blanket clemency.

That was the position he shared with more than 100 victims' family members at a December meeting. In a speech Saturday, he said that as recent as a week ago he thought he would not grant mercy to every

Death Row inmate. But then, he said, he changed his mind.

"They have a right to feel betrayed," he said in an interview after his speech, blaming his own vacillation. "I have probably misled them, certainly not intentionally. ... I apologize to those people."

Many friends and family members of murder victims did not accept that apology. They said they believe Ryan had intended from the start to pardon or commute the sentence of every condemned prisoner, and that

the move was designed to divert attention from his administration's corruption scandals.

"I just think it's political tactics," said Helen Sophie Rajca of Bolingbrook, Ill., whose two brothers were stabbed and shot to death in 1979. "It's not right what he did. ... This is just to blindsides everybody from what he's done."

On Saturday, Ryan declared the state's capital punishment system "haunted by the demon of error" and commuted the sentences of

every inmate on Illinois' Death Row.

With two days left as governor, Ryan declared that most of the state's 156 condemned prisoners will now serve terms of life in prison without parole. Three Death Row inmates, whose cases Ryan said raised particular fairness concerns, were granted 40-year prison terms, allowing the possibility of release in several years. And 12 additional people — who had once been sentenced to Death Row but are awaiting new sentencing — will receive

life in prison without parole.

"Because the Illinois death penalty system is arbitrary and capricious — and therefore immoral — I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death," Ryan said, borrowing the words of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun. "I won't stand for it. ... I had to act."

© 2003, Chicago Tribune. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services. Monica Davey and Steve Mills contributed to this report.

News briefs

Maurice Gibb, of Bee Gees fame, dies at 53

MIAMI — Maurice Gibb, whose mastery of popular music for more than four decades and whose contribution to contemporary standards such as "Stayin' Alive," "How Deep Is Your Love" and "Massachusetts" proved indelible, lost his fight for life at 1 a.m. Sunday.

The 53-year-old musician and member of the Bee Gees — with twin Robin Gibb and brother Barry, 55 — died at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach.

"To our extended family, friends and fans, it is with great sadness and sorrow that we regretfully announce the passing of Maurice Gibb," Gibb's family said in a statement. "His love and enthusiasm and energy for life remain an inspiration to all of us. We will all deeply miss him."

Gibb, who sang and played keyboards and bass for the Bee Gees, had emergency surgery for an intestinal blockage Thursday. The hospital reported that before his surgery he suffered cardiac arrest.

"There were no clues that this was

going on; it's devastating," Bee Gees recording engineer John Merchant said Sunday morning from the brothers' Miami Beach recording studio, Middle Ear.

There are more than 500 cover versions of the Bee Gees' songs in existence, the brothers were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997 and they have won seven Grammy awards.

Though Gibb's bass-playing gave "Stayin' Alive" its propulsive and unforgettable lift — try to imagine that immortal opening shot of John Travolta walking down the street at the beginning of the Saturday Night Fever film without that beat — Gibb made an impact when he sang lead, too, as on "Man in the Middle" from 2001's "This Is Where I Came In," the Bee Gees' last CD.

"It's really about me in the middle of everything that I've done in my life. I just made it more romantic," Gibb said in an interview with The Herald in April 2001. "Someone once called me the engine. Each one of us fell into a role as we grew up. ... I always thought we were triplets, but something happened to Barry — he sort of sprang up real quick! So we've gone

through life doing everything together."

Funeral arrangements are pending. — Howard Cohen, Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

Gen. Franks: Military can handle challenges

MACDILL AIR BASE, Florida — Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of the U.S. Central Command, says that no matter where a problem emerges in the world, if America's military is called on to handle it, "we win," even as it fights a global war on terrorism.

In a rare interview exclusively for Knight Ridder Newspapers at his headquarters outside Tampa, Franks declared: "It doesn't make any difference. You allude to Iraq. It could be North Korea. It can be any number of places. It doesn't make any difference. If we do it at this point in American history, we win."

Franks, who is in charge of U.S. military operations in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, said that America's forces are trained, equipped and ready as never before.

"In one respect we live in a crease in history. We found our own vulnerability on 9/11. Since then, we have come to grips with that reality at the

same time we are finding new technologies, new capabilities, new tactics, techniques, procedures, new doctrines, new capacities for the use of military force."

Franks predicted that if a decision is ever made to go to war with Iraq — "and I can tell you on the record that the president of the United States has not made a decision to do this" — an international coalition equal to the 35-nation one assembled for the 1991 war with Iraq would come together to join in the campaign.

Despite widespread speculation that rising desert heat in spring requires any invasion of Iraq to begin well before then, the general said his forces were not tied to any timetable.

— Joseph L. Galloway, Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

Families say goodbye to departing Marines

NORFOLK NAVAL BASE, Va. — Not even bitter cold could stop families from turning out Sunday morning to bid farewell to roughly 5,000 Marines and sailors aboard four more ships departing Hampton Roads for the escalating war on terrorism and an increasingly likely war with Iraq.

Like the three ships that left on Fri-

day, the amphibious ships USS Ashland and USS Portland, based at Little Creek Naval, and the USS Kearsarge and USS Bataan, based at Norfolk, are used to launch invading Marine units.

Navy officials wouldn't comment on where the ships are going, what they'll be doing or how long they'll be doing it.

Among the families here, there's a sense that war is on the march and that the last hug should be cherished because the next could be months away.

"We are preparing for a big deployment," said John Masters, who along with son Joshua, 7, daughter Paryn, 3, and mother-in-law Donna Maes, who were waiting to see off wife, mother, daughter and USS Kearsarge legal officer Petty Officer 1st Class Leonette Masters.

Masters' ship carries 1,100 sailors and a landing force of 1,900 Marines.

"This isn't a scheduled thing, so they'll be gone for as long as it takes," said John, also a petty officer who is currently on shore duty. "I just hope that we get over there and raise hell and get back."

— R.W. Rogers, Daily Press (KRT)


DUCK

Around Town


Use your UO student or faculty ID as your passport around town!

With it, you can ride all buses on all LTD routes FREE* — anytime and anywhere LTD travels.

Or, **BREEZE** around town! Catch the **BREEZE** to great shopping and restaurants. It's the **Way to Go!**



Look for your Handy Dandy Guide at the EMU or the LTD downtown center. It showcases shortcuts to and from the UO campus.



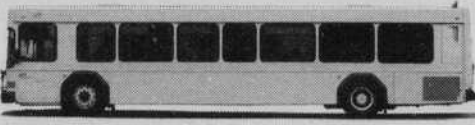
Lane Transit District

687-5555 (Guest Services)

ltd@ltd.lane.or.us (E-mail)

www.ltd.org (Internet)

800-735-2900 (TTY)



*Pass is provided through the ASUO student fees.