



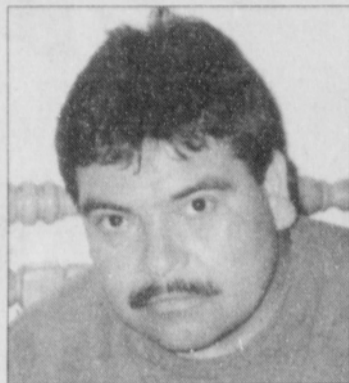
VANCOUVER/POLICE

Hit and Run Driver Wanted

The Portland Police Bureau Traffic Division, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, is once again asking for your help in solving a felony hit and run to a pedestrian.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of Monday, May 21, 41-year-old Pablo Estrada was struck by a hit and run vehicle while crossing Southeast Powell Boulevard at 136th Avenue.

According to investigators, Estrada was walking from the north to the south side of Powell when an eastbound car struck



Pablo Estrada died from injuries in a hit and run accident last May.

him. The vehicle continued eastbound on Powell without stopping. Estrada was transported to an area hospital where he later died as a result of his injuries. Witnesses described the car as a white mid-size sedan with a boxy shape and black side moldings.

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, reported to Crime Stoppers, which leads to an arrest in this case, or any unsolved felony crime, and you can remain anonymous. Call Crime Stoppers at 503-823-HELP.

Union Pacific Charged For Bluff Fire

The Portland Fire Bureau will bill Union Pacific Railroad for the cost of fighting an urban wildfire that threatened a North Portland neighborhood Aug. 8, bureau officials said.

The bureau's final investigation report, concludes that a Union Pacific train with mechanical problems started the brush fire that quickly climbed a bluff near the University of Portland, said Neil Heesacker, bureau spokesman.

Investigators have been un-

able to determine what created the sparks that several witnesses saw coming from under the passing train's cars, he said.

"All 40 of the cars have split up and gone to who knows where across the country," Heesacker said, and investigators haven't been able to look at them.

The fire threatened as many as 100 homes and took 170 firefighters, every fire truck in the city, helicopters and fireboats to battle.

Union Pacific is still investigating, said Mike Furtney, a Union Pacific spokesman. The railroad has not accepted responsibility for the fire.

The blaze was one of the worst wildfires in Portland's history. But the bureau estimated property loss along the blackened bluff on the Willamette River's east bank at only about \$20,000. That amount was for lost property, ranging from a greenhouse to a solarium to four wooden decks.

Mother Charged in Baby's Death

A woman accused of murdering her newborn son and leaving his body near a garbage bin told a friend she was trying to hide the pregnancy from her family, according to court documents.

Matilde Perez-Merino, 24, of Wood Village, was arraigned last Wednesday on charges of murder by abuse and abuse of a corpse. She pleaded not-guilty to both charges.

Perez-Merino does not speak Spanish, but a very rare Indian dialect from Mexico. Questions remain as to whether Perez-Merino would understand the charges against her.

According to court documents, Perez-Merino told a friend that her



Matilde Perez-Merino

family did not know of her pregnancy. She said she had delivered a baby some time before, and was experiencing complications.

Perez-Merino checked into a Gresham hospital Aug. 18, seek-

ing treatment following an apparent childbirth. She didn't bring a baby with her, causing hospital officials to call police, said Dan Oldham, a Multnomah County Sheriff's Office spokesman.

Multnomah County sheriff's deputies found the full-term baby boy's body in two garbage bags. The baby had been dead for 12 hours and maybe as long as two days.

The baby was born alive with no medical conditions that could have led to his death, said the state medical examiner.

The cause of death was determined to be suffocation or lack of post-birth care.

Dance Club Killer Sentenced to Death

(AP) - A Washington County jury sentenced an Aloha man to death last week for the 1998 murder of a 15-year-old Tigard girl.

Martin Allen Johnson, 44, found guilty last week of aggravated murder in the death of Heather Fay Fraser, is the 26th man on Oregon's death row.

"It won't bring Heather back, but I'm so glad it's over," said Ronda Fraser, Heather's mother.

To apply the death penalty, all 12 jurors had to find that Johnson deliberately killed Fraser, that he is a continuing threat to society and there were no circumstances in his background to mitigate against execution.

During the trial, several girls testified that Johnson took them to Portland dance clubs, bought

them presents, supplied them with alcohol, slipped morphine into their drinks or knocked them out by making them smell drugged-soaked rags. Some said they awoke to find Johnson sexually assaulting them.

Dr. Nikolas Hartshorne, Oregon's deputy state medical examiner, performed the autopsy on Fraser. He said she had enough morphine in her body to knock her out and that she died of strangulation, as evidenced by the bruises around the sides of her neck, the deep bruise inside the back of her neck and the broken blood vessels on her face.

Prosecutors said Johnson threw the girl's body into a river in hopes that it would drift to the sea. Instead, the body washed up on

Social Security Beach, near Warrenton in Clatsop County.

"He preyed upon everyone he sold drugs to," said Rob Bletko, the chief deputy district attorney.

David Peters, Johnson's attorney, agreed that there was no question that Johnson was a sexual predator.

"He is a messed-up, screwed-up human being," Peters said in his closing arguments. "He is sick. He doesn't fit in well with society. He can't handle responsibility."

However, Peters argued that Johnson did well in prison and would not be a threat to young girls were he to receive a sentence of life in prison without parole.

Man Charged in Acid Etching Vandalism

Officers Teresa Uttke and Dan Costello of the Southeast Precinct Neighborhood Response Team arrested Travis Delon Wallender, 24, last week, in connection with etching vandalism to several businesses near South-

east 33rd and Belmont. The reported value of the damage, which occurred on Aug. 15 and Aug. 16, exceeds \$16,000.

The officers in charge of the investigation believe that additional crimes may have

taken place and have yet to be reported to the Portland Police Bureau.

Investigators are encouraging anyone who has property damaged by acid to call Officer Teresa Uttke at 503-823-2155.

Domestic Partner Benefits Triumph

(AP) - The Washington Supreme Court has upheld the city of Vancouver's policy of giving benefits to the domestic partners of city employees.

The eight-to-one decision will likely stretch beyond the city's borders. Other cities in Washington and the state have similar policies.

The policy allows domestic partners — including same-sex partners — to receive health in-

surance benefits. And it allows employees to use their sick leave to care for partners or partners' children.

Vancouver resident Roni Heinsma challenged the policy, arguing that it created a kind of mini-marriage. State law forbids same-sex marriage.

Heinsma's challenge was backed by the Alliance Defense Fund and the Northstar Legal Center, two groups dedicated to

conservative Christian issues.

But the justices agreed with the city that the regulation of employee benefits is a local matter.

City officials say they began the policy to help recruit and retain employees.

Since the policy was initiated in 1998, at least 29 domestic partnerships have been registered and approved. The city paid more than 20-thousand dollars to cover the cost of the policy in 1998.

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UP President Issues Campus Gag Order

The president of the University of Portland threatened to fire staff members who talk to news reporters about the recent murder on campus.

In a memo sent out throughout the campus, President David Tyson also warned that students could get expelled for talking publicly about the unsolved murder, according to a report by KGW.

The television station said Tyson said he wrote the memo with deep disappointment because a few people have "chosen to take action that could compromise the investigation."

It reported Tyson as saying it's been three months since Kate Johnson was murdered in her dorm room and the best thing anyone from the university can do for her family is to share information only with investigators.