

News at a Glance

Black leaders in Houston call for DA to resign

HOUSTON (AP) — Embattled Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal is facing renewed cries for his resignation, this time from prominent black leaders in the Houston area.

A coalition of black ministers and community leaders said Friday that Rosenthal had misled them and should immediately resign.

"I feel jilted," said Robert Jefferson, a pastor and member of Houston Ministers Against Crime. "He was smiling with us in one place and stabbing us in our backs in another."

The district attorney has been under fire since the revelation of e-mails he had sent and received that included love notes to his secretary, racist jokes and videos of men sneaking up to women and tearing their clothes off in public.

Rosenthal declined to discuss the latest calls for his resignation. Earlier in the week he said he would not resign despite admitted poor judgment.

The Texas Attorney General's office is investigating whether Rosenthal should lose his job for sending and receiving inappropriate messages through his county e-mail account. Republican officeholders and party leaders have been calling for the GOP prosecutor's resignation.

Rosenthal also used his county e-mail account to plan his now-aborted re-election campaign. Such messages may violate Texas laws barring the use of government property for political activity.

The 860 e-mails emerged as part of a federal civil rights lawsuit against the Harris County Sheriff's Department.



Rosenthal

Redding portrait returned to city hall

MACON, Ga. (AP) — Former Macon Mayor Jack Ellis has returned a portrait of soul legend Otis Redding moved from city hall along with Ellis' personal belongings when he left office in December.

Ellis says he noticed the portrait at his home a few weeks after he returned from a vacation in the Caribbean at the end of the month. He says he did not supervise when his office was packed.

Andrew Blascovich, a spokesman for current Mayor Robert Reichert, called the incident an "internal miscommunication."

The city commissioned the painting in 1975, eight years after Redding, who was raised in Macon, died in a Wisconsin plane crash with members of his band at age 26.

Cause of West's death still unknown

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The exact reason why Kanye West's mother died shortly after undergoing plastic surgery could not be determined but there was no sign of "surgical or anesthetic misadventure," according to a coroner's report released last Thursday.

Donda West, 58, died Nov. 10 at a Los Angeles-area hospital, a day after she had breast reduction, tummy tuck and liposuction procedures.

The report noted coronary artery disease and multiple post-operative factors that could have played a role, but said the exact contribution of each factor could not be determined.

"The final matter of death could not be determined," the coroner's office said in a statement.

The coroner's office had said early indications suggested she died from surgical complications. Studies have shown serious complications from plastic surgery are rare, with death occurring in 1 in 58,810 procedures.

Dr. Jan Adams, who operated on Donda West, has denied any wrongdoing. Adams has repeatedly suggested other causes of death including heart attack, pulmonary embolism or accidental overdose of painkillers prescribed after the cosmetic surgery.

The state medical board is investigating whether Adams' license should be revoked or suspended after two alcohol-related arrests in the past four years.

Donda West was found unresponsive at her home a day after her surgery. In emergency 911 tapes released earlier this month, two unidentified women told a dispatcher that West suffered a heart attack and unsuccessfully tried to revive her.

TSU Regents pick John Rudley to replace fired Priscilla Slade

HOUSTON (AP) — Texas Southern University regents on Friday named John Rudley as the sole finalist to succeed Priscilla Slade as president of the troubled historically black school.

Rudley, who is currently serving as interim president at the University of Houston, is now poised to become TSU's first permanent president since the university fired Slade amid a spending scandal in June 2006.

TSU regents chose Rudley by a 9-0 vote, the Houston Chronicle reported on its Web site last Friday. State law requires the regents to wait 21 days before finalizing the appointment.

Slade was accused of mispending university money to decorate her homes. She was indicted but avoided conviction when the jury in her trial deadlocked, resulting in a mistrial.

The allegations against Slade coincided with reports that revealed a pattern of financial mismanagement at TSU, the state's largest historically black university. Gov. Rick Perry called for a state takeover of the university that was later put on hold, and the entire board of regents was replaced.

Rudley was TSU's chief financial officer and internal auditor in the 1980s, and his wife is currently a law professor at the university.

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636, Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636



MGM Photo

Oscar winners Forest Whitaker and Denzel Washington in "The Great Debaters."

'Debaters' leads Image Award nominations

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEVERLY HILLS — "The Great Debaters," a film based on the real-life victories of a black debating team in the 1930s, topped the list of nominees for the 39th NAACP Image Awards.

"Girlfriends" and "Everybody Hates Chris" led TV nominees honored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), America's oldest civil rights organization.

"The Great Debaters" collected eight nominations, including outstanding motion picture and both outstanding actor and outstanding director

for Denzel Washington. The movie also garnered three supporting-actor nominations for Forest Whitaker, Nate Parker and Denzel Whitaker.

Other best-picture nominees: "American Gangster," "I Am Legend," "Talk to Me" and "Tyler Perry's Why Did I Get Married?"

Other outstanding-actor nominees were Columbus

Short for "Stomp the Yard," Don Cheadle for "Talk to Me," Terrence Howard for "Pride" and Will Smith for "I Am Legend."

Nominated for outstanding actress: Jurnee Smollett for "The Great Debaters," Angelina Jolie for "A Mighty Heart," Halle Berry for "Things We Lost In the Fire," Jill Scott Perry's "Why Did I Get Married?" and Taraji P. Henson for "Talk To Me."

In TV categories, "Everybody Hates Chris" and "Girlfriends" had seven nominations each, including best TV comedy.

In music categories, the nominees for outstanding album were Alicia Keys' "As I Am," Chris Brown's "Exclusive," Kanye West's "Graduation," "Growing Pains" by Mary J. Blige and "System" by Seal.

The Image Awards honor those who promote diversity in the arts. Awards in 44 categories, including literature, will be presented Feb. 14 in a Los Angeles ceremony broadcast live on Fox.



Keys

Trial of alleged male rapist is set to start

Only one in 33 men in U.S. have been victims of sexual assault

BY JUAN A. LOZANO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — A jury was selected Friday to consider the case against a 20-year-old man accused of robbing and raping other young men in a nearby refinery town.

Keith Hill is accused of stalking, sexually assaulting and robbing five young men in Baytown during an eight-month spree in 2006. Opening arguments were set to start Monday.

The case not only spread fear in the oil-refining town of 70,000 people about 30 miles east of Houston but also piqued the interest of those who study the criminal mind, because the attacker preyed on men, something of a rarity in the world of crime.

The U.S. Justice Department says one in 33 men in the United States has been a victim of a rape or attempted rape, compared with one in six women. Experts say men are far less likely to report a rape to authorities, because they fear being perceived as weak or see the attack as an assault on their masculinity.

All the alleged victims were white. Hill is black. The jury chosen on Friday is made up of 10 white women, two blacks and one Hispanic in the panel of 12 jurors and one alternate.

The trial is only focusing on one of the alleged attacks, which authorities say occurred in May 2006. Hill is accused of forcing a man to perform oral sex at gunpoint.

Prosecutor Spence Graham said authorities will decide how to proceed with the four other cases after Hill's trial.

"The families (of the victims) are all relieved the process is coming to a conclusion," he said.

Graham would not comment on why prosecutors decided the alleged May 2006 attack would be the first one to go to trial, saying he would not discuss evidence in the case before testimony began.

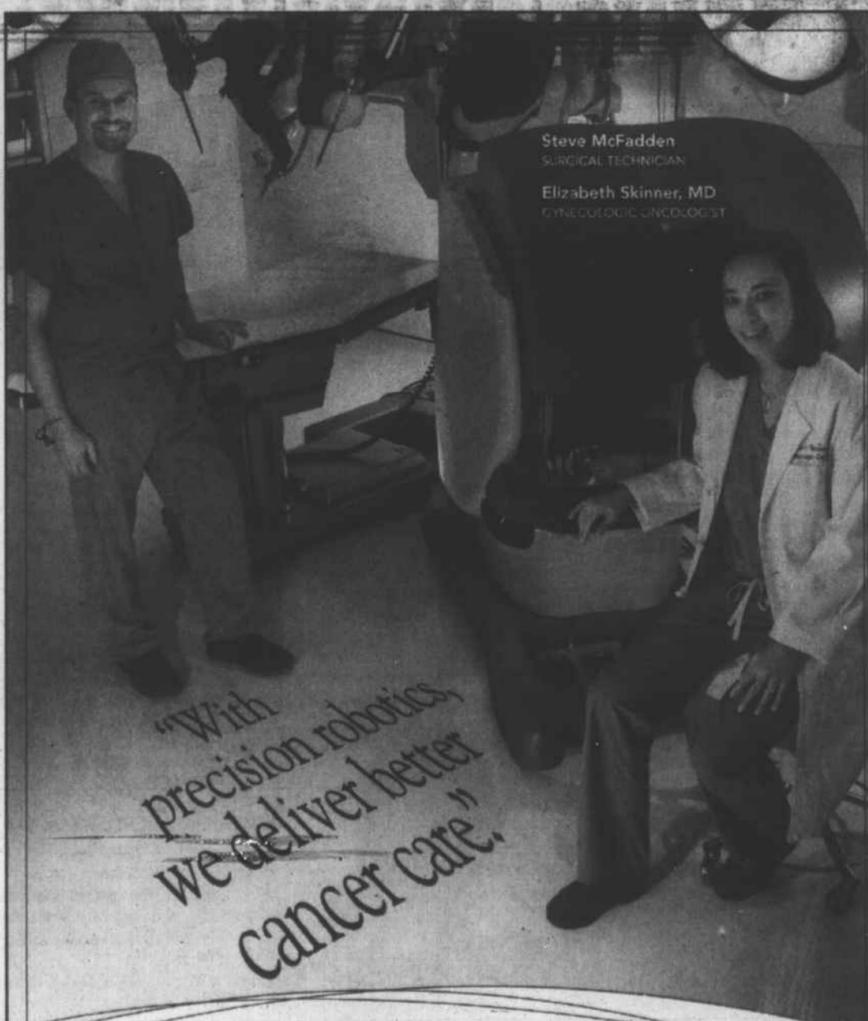
Laine Lindsey, Hill's attorney, said his client was innocent and declined further comment. Posters were plastered around Baytown showing a sketch of a young man identified as a serial robber-rapist. The attacks occurred over various months in 2006, and local chat rooms and bulletin boards were flooded with postings reflecting worry.

Graham said prosecutors were not focused on the rarity of this type of crime.

"We see a lot of tragedy. A victim is a victim," he said.

If convicted, Hill could receive anything from five years probation to life in prison.

In the other cases, Hill, besides aggravated assault, also faces charges of aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon and aggravated kidnapping.



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