

Robertson libel suit denies evasion of front-line duty

By CARRIE DOVE
Staff Writer

Republican presidential candidate Pat Robertson won't be waiting at his campaign headquarters March 8 for the Super Tuesday primary returns — he'll be in court, disputing allegations that he used his father's political influence to avoid fighting in the Korean War.

His libel suit, filed in October 1986, charged former Rep. Paul McCloskey, R-Calif., and Rep. Andrew Jacobs, D-Ind., with "knowingly passing information they believed to be false," after they made public a letter written by McCloskey alleging that Robertson's father, former Sen. Willis Robertson, used his influence to keep Robertson out of combat duty.

Jacobs was dropped from the suit last August after a judge determined that he had not knowingly released a libelous letter.

Robertson enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves in 1948 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1950, said Georgia Hill, a spokes-

woman for Americans for Robertson in Tennessee.

McCloskey was on a troop transport ship with Robertson in 1950 en route to Korea, but Robertson left the ship in Japan and was transferred to a noncombat unit called Casual Company, largely made up of recuperating wounded.

The evidence for McCloskey's allegations is a letter from Sen. Robertson to the commander of the Marine forces in Korea, said George Lehner, McCloskey's lawyer. The letter thanked the commander for "having his son go to such an interesting and historical place in Japan," Lehner said.

"There is circumstantial evidence that would suggest that (Sen. Robertson) let his wishes be known (because they were good friends)," Lehner said.

Later that year, Robertson transferred to the 1st Marine Division in Korea as an assistant adjutant, where he received the Korean Service Medal and three bronze battle stars, Hill said.

"The assistant adjutant is largely

an administrative function, responsible to the commanding officer for correspondence and liaison," said Capt. Linda Western, a spokeswoman for the Marine Corps.

McCloskey wrote that Robertson's duties included the "booze run to Japan," said Lehner, meaning that he bought alcohol for the troops.

Also, the Korean Service Medal with bronze stars is "a location-type medal, probably just meaning that he was there," Western said.

But Robertson's case is strong, campaign officials say.

"He's (Robertson's) got no reason to back off from saying he was at the front lines," said deputy national political director John Rawlson.

Presidential campaigns are where most politically motivated libel suits occur, although they are usually settled out of court after the election, said Daniel Pollitt, a Kenan professor of law at UNC.

But Lehner said McCloskey would not settle.

Robertson officials said the letter was released to hurt the campaign.

"I think it was an attempt to discourage him from running," said Rawlson.

But Pollitt said he disagreed and that McCloskey probably had a strong case.

Campaign officials are downplaying the effect of the suit.

"We don't think it is going to be an issue in the campaign," said

Barbara Gattullo, a Robertson spokeswoman.

Fellow Republican candidate Bob Dole won't use the information in his campaign, said press secretary Dale Tate.

"He would stay away from bringing up that issue," she said.

National public opinion hasn't been affected by the suit, and South-

ern voters don't care about the allegations, said Charles Balan, a member of Students for Robertson.

"The voters are not really taking it as an issue," he said.

Out of the 234 sons of senators and congressmen who were eligible to go to Vietnam, 28 actually served, according to a recent article in Vanity Fair.

PTL to auction Bakker house

By BETH RHEA
Staff Writer

The \$950,000 former home of televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker is among eight residences to be sold in an auction to raise money for the financially strapped PTL ministry, said M.C. "Red" Benton, the newly-appointed interim vice president of finance and administration.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Rufus Reynolds approved the ministry's plan last week to hold the auction April 16 in addition to staging a telethon from Feb. 29 to April 1.

"We've been in the process of restoring credibility," said Linda Ivey, director of media services, "and people are beginning to feel confident that it's being restored."

The response from the ministry's supporters has been "continually growing," she said. PTL had its largest audience ever Feb. 23 for the taping of its live program, she said.

In addition, PTL took 40 percent more phone calls from viewers than a week ago. "We've had a tremendous increase in the number of people who have called and reported how God has worked in their lives," Ivey said.

PTL has changed its concentration from raising money for completing construction projects on the ministry's complex to ministry, Benton said.

"We feel that if we minister, the response will continue to grow and our financial needs will be met," Ivey said. "Money will follow ministry."

The ministry is preparing to implement a reorganization plan under Chapter 11 bankruptcy law regula-

tions. In order to begin implementing it, PTL needs to have \$5 million in cash by May 2, Ivey said, which should come from the telethon.

The auction of eight homes should earn \$1.5 million, she said. In addition to this sale, the ministry received the court's permission to sell two plots of land not adjacent to PTL property.

PTL leaders expect the sale of both the residences and the land to net \$5.2 million, Ivey said. These funds will go toward meeting the next goal of the reorganization plan, which is to

obtain \$5.2 million by August.

Benton said the PTL spends \$15,000 to \$18,000 per day.

"We're running short of the needs," he said. "We need to make the operation break even."

The PTL has an estimated debt of \$75 million and assets totaling \$150 million, Benton said, but he expressed confidence that the ministry's creditors would be paid.

"I think it (PTL) has a chance to reorganize and operate on a sound basis," Benton said.

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Church founder to give seminar

By AMY GRUBBS
Staff Writer

Mary Cosby, founder of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., will be holding a seminar at the University Presbyterian Church this Saturday from 3 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

The seminar, entitled "Inward Journey, Outward Journey," will explore the interaction between spiritual growth, such as prayer, and human relations projects, such as missions for the needy.

Cosby said that personal spiritual growth combined with human relations projects is the main thrust of the interracial, nondenominational church that she and her husband Gordon founded in 1948.

The church is responsible for funding a hospital for the homeless, a home for Central American refugees, a school for emotionally disturbed youths and a Montessori school for underprivileged children, Cosby said. The church also buys and renovates old buildings, providing housing for people who have "lower than lower income," she said.

In addition to the hospital for the homeless, the church has also opened two separate medical clinics in Washington, D.C.

"The Church of the Saviour's doctrine is very middle-of-the-road," said University Presbyterian Church member Catherine Dickman, who has studied the Church of the Saviour. The church does not use a literal translation of the Bible, she said.

Cosby said the Church of the Saviour has about 200 official members. She said she had no plans for branching out into other cities because she felt like the nation's capital was the most important place to be located.

"There is other community work to be done, but someone else will have to do it," Cosby said. "We have our hands full."

Following the Saturday seminar, a dinner will be held in the Fellowship Hall at 5:30 p.m. The cost is \$3.75.

Cosby will also preach during the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sunday worship services at University Presbyterian Church.

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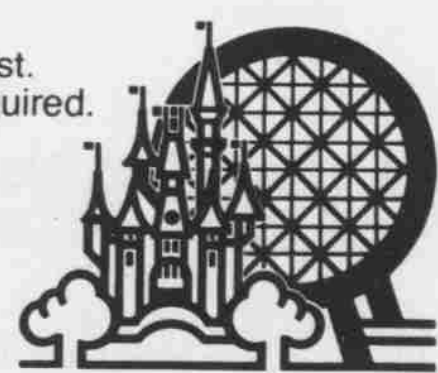
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