

Around the Nation

Last Sea Vessel of Season Clears St. Lawrence

CLEVELAND, Dec. 20 (AP)—The last ocean-going vessel of the season, a damaged Liberian freighter, made it into the St. Lawrence Seaway today some 40 hours after the system was scheduled to close.

A spokesman at the United States Coast Guard station in Cleveland said that the freighter Attica entered the Seaway at Cape Vincent just after midnight.

The Seaway had been scheduled to close at 8 A.M. Saturday, but the deadline was extended to accommodate several tardy ships.

A 17-foot crack in the Attica's hull was discovered last week near Port Huron, Mich. Coast Guard officials said the damage apparently stemmed from improper loading at Chicago.

Coast Guard inspectors at Detroit checked the Attica's cargo of soybeans, which had been shifted to keep the crack from expanding, and declared the ship seaworthy.

The 538-foot vessel left Detroit Saturday morning under tugboat escort to the year-round port at Montreal, where it was to go into drydock for repairs. A Coast Guard spokesman said he was unsure whether the Attica would winter in Montreal.

All other saltwater ships in the Great Lakes had reportedly cleared the Seaway and were heading into the Atlantic by yesterday.

Illinois Parole Board Gets Death Threat in Mail

CHICAGO, Dec. 20 (UPI)—The 10 members of the Illinois Parole and Pardon Board and their families have been threatened with death if the board ever paroles Richard Speck, the convicted murderer, Peter Kotsos, the board chairman said today.

Mr. Kotsos said the death threats came in a letter written in red ink and post-marked Dec. 14 in Suffern, N. Y. The return address read "Dr. Lombardi, Mount Ivy, N. Y."

Mr. Kotsos said that the letter appeared to have been written by a crank, but was forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"If this board ever dares to grant parole to this pimp and killer of eight nurses," the letter said, "each and every one of you . . . will die the exact same way."

The letter also said, "The same goes for your families."

Mr. Speck, 34 years old, was sentenced to 400 to 1,200 years in prison for the murders of eight nurses in a Chicago townhouse on July 14, 1966. His first bid for parole was denied last Sept. 15.

Inventor of 'Blue-Box' Accused of Phone Fraud

BOSTON, Dec. 20 (UPI)—An inventive 27-year-old graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who manufactured more than 200 electronic devices known as "blue-boxes" that allow free worldwide telephone calls has been accused of defrauding the telephone company, the police said today.

The devices generate audio tones that permit direct telephoning, bypassing the telephone billing apparatus.

The police charged Raymond C. Straub with 200 counts of possession of illegal devices to defraud the telephone company. The maximum sentence could be a \$2,000 fine for each count or one year in jail for each count.

According to Massachusetts State Police, 200 "blue-boxes" were seized at the man's apartment in Cambridge, Mass., along with diagrams and electronic components.

The police said that Mr. Straub was planning to sell the devices for \$300 apiece.

A Predicted Quake Fails To Strike in California

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 20—Millions of Southern Californians moved routinely through the day despite a publicized prediction that a strong earthquake would strike today.

Henry Minturn, who gained attention this fall by reportedly forecasting other quakes around the world, had once predicted that a quake would hit Southern California on Dec. 20, but he later withdrew the prediction amid challenges from the scientific community. The withdrawal was not nearly as well publicized as the prediction.

Absenteeism at downtown office buildings was reported to be normal for the pre-Christmas week. Shopping at department stores did not seem to be affected.

Telephone calls to the Caltech Seismic Laboratory were also running at a routine rate. A spokesman said there were about 30 queries today related to earth tremors.

New Trial Granted for Man Convicted of Murder

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 20 (AP)—A judge opened the way today for a new trial for Robert Wilkinson, who was convicted of murder and jailed for 439 days in a fire-bombing to which another man since has pleaded guilty.

Judge John Geisz of Common Pleas Court overturned the previous verdict and gave the district attorney's office 120 days to decide whether Mr. Wilkinson will be retried.

Judge Geisz ruled after hearing testimony at a special hearing from Nelson Garcia, 16 years old, who testified at Mr. Wilkinson's trial that he saw the defendant throw a firebomb into the home of Radames Santiago. The man's wife and three children, as well as the son of a neighbor, were killed in the bombing in October 1975.

Mr. Garcia has since recanted his testimony.

A federal grand jury has indicted three men in the case, and one, David McGinnis, 19, has pleaded guilty.

After Mr. McGinnis pleaded guilty, Judge Geisz reduced Mr. Wilkinson's bail and he was freed on bond last Thursday.

FIREBOMBING IN 1975 FINALLY CLEARED UP

Wrong Man Is Freed From Prison and Six Detectives Are Jailed for Civil Rights Violation

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 10 (AP) — At approximately 3:20 A.M. on Sunday, Oct. 5, 1975, a flaming whisky bottle with a diaper for a wick shattered the front window of the rowhouse where Radames Santiago lived.

The huge flash of flame killed his wife, three of his children and a young male house guest, victims of the racial heat in the Kensington section of the city that Indian summer.

More than four years later, on Thursday, six homicide detectives who had worked on the case began 15-month prison terms at the Eglin Federal Prison Camp in Florida. They had been convicted of violating the civil rights of witnesses and suspects brought in after the firebombing.

The detectives, who appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court and lost, have maintained their innocence and refuse to discuss the case with reporters, as does Police Commissioner Joseph O'Neill.

A Neighbor Accused

Just after the incident, a 14-year-old boy told police he had seen Robert Wilkinson, a neighbor, toss the flaming bottle. While the fire was still smoldering, Mr. Wilkinson, then 25, his wife, Christine, and several neighbors were rounded up. The questioning went for 20 hours.

Eventually Mr. Wilkinson confessed — to a crime that he had not committed. He would spend almost 15 months in jail.

In court, he described the interrogation:

"I was sitting in the metal chair and the big colored guy came in, and he takes his rings off his fingers, he stuck them in his pocket and he slapped me across the face."

Mr. Wilkinson, who is mildly retarded, testified later that he had been black-jacked and stomped. He said two detectives had told him that if he did not sign a confession, "I would never see Chris again, or my baby, or anything."

In another room was Ronald Hanley, 39, who later testified that the officers insisted he tell them that he had made the firebomb and given it to Mr. Wilkinson.

Struck '40 or 50 Times'

Mr. Hanley told a judge that he had been struck on the ribs and chest "at least 40 or 50 times," that he had been punched and "crumpled to the floor."

Mr. Hanley, saying he "just couldn't handle it no more," told the police that he had given the bomb to Mr. Wilkinson.

He had not. Four other neighbors would later tell The Philadelphia Inquirer that they also had been coerced into giving false statements.

Some 24 hours after the investigation began, police had their "evidence." Mr. Wilkinson, who had turned in the alarm and helped uncoil firehoses on the night of the fire, was charged with five murders. So was Mr. Hanley, but charges were dropped when his statement was ruled inadmissible because he had been beaten by police.

Prosecutors produced the 14-year-old boy, Nelson Garcia, who said he had seen Mr. Wilkinson throw the firebomb. The jury believed him; Mr. Wilkinson was convicted in April 1976.

Statement to U.S. Authorities

What the prosecutors did not reveal was that David McGinnis, who also lived in the Kensington neighborhood, who would later tell Federal authorities that he had hurled the firebomb, had come forward to declare his guilt — and to assert that Mr. Wilkinson was innocent.

One of the prosecutors, David Berman, testified later that he had thrown away a tape recording of Mr. McGinnis's statement. He called it "nothing but garbage, a pack of lies."

At the urging of Puerto Rican citizens, Federal prosecutors began another investigation. They arrested Mr. Hanley and Mr. McGinnis, but found nothing to implicate Mr. Wilkinson.

Then the case began to unravel. Nelson Garcia admitted that he had lied. He said that after the firebomb was thrown, he saw Mr. Wilkinson jump into his car and speed off — apparently in search of a fire alarm.

"I don't know why I said it," the youth said of his accusation of Mr. Wilkinson.

Confession Thrown Out

Mr. Wilkinson's confession was thrown out by a judge who ruled that the defendant was not capable of reading what the police had written for him. On June 2, 1977, all charges against him were dropped.

In the fall of 1977 the six detectives — John Ellis, James Carty, James Curley, William Jones, James Crown and Roseborough McMillan — were indicted by a Federal grand jury. Mr. McMillan was accused of striking Wilkinson. Mr. Crown and Mr. Jones, the indictment said, had jumped on his legs and "struck him with a blackjack and with their fists."

On March 22, 1978, the detectives were convicted of conspiring to beat and threaten seven witnesses and suspects. Two were acquitted of assaulting Mr. McGinnis, who, in a plea-bargaining arrangement, received a sentence of 22 years in prison. Mr. Hanley drew a life sentence.

The jury did not reach a verdict on the counts that charged the detectives with beating Mr. Hanley and Mr. Wilkinson. "I spent 15 months in jail for something I didn't do," Mr. Wilkinson said. "I just want to see justice for everybody."