

Driver who killed 2 gets 15 years

By JAMES EWINGER
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Genuine regret and forgiveness were not enough to keep a Cleveland man out of prison for killing a mother and daughter while he was driving drunk.

Michael Sneed, 38, got a sentence of 15 years and six months, two years short of the maximum, for the July 5 deaths of Jewell Fair, 59, and her daughter, Joyce Lambert, 39.

Sneed pleaded guilty last month to driving under the influence, two counts of aggravated vehicular homicide and five counts of aggravated vehicular assault.

He wept openly yesterday as he told Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Nancy M. Russo: "I'm willing to accept my punishment without any regret."

Russo said Sneed displayed "genuine remorse" but also said he "clearly demonstrated a pattern of criminal behavior" during his life.

She noted some juvenile convictions for breaking and entering and destruction of property, 1980 convictions for robbery and felonious assault for which he served two years in prison, a 1990 conviction for domestic violence for which he was supposed to get alcohol counseling, and, most significant, a July 13, 1996, conviction in Cleveland for driving under the influence.

Chris McGhee, brother of Fair and uncle of Lambert, said in court that their deaths were totally avoidable.

"Mr. Sneed, I believe you're sincere," McGhee said in a calm but firm voice. "But if you were

this sincere a year ago, we wouldn't be here."

McGhee said emergency workers told him of finding empty beer cans in the back of Sneed's car and Fair's bible in the back of hers.

Russo said police estimated Sneed's speed at more than 70 mph in a 35-mph zone. He ran a stop sign at W. 130th St. and West Ave., where he broadsided Fair's car.

In addition to the deaths, three Fair-Lambert family members were injured: Lila Fair, 31, of Leeila Ave., suffered a head injury and broken right hip; Sissy Lambert, 11, had a broken pelvis and facial wounds; and her brother, Tony Lambert, 10, received facial cuts and a jaw injury.

Assistant County Prosecutor

Fernando Mack said the crash effectively eliminated "two generations in a matter of seconds."

Russo said she did not impose the maximum sentence because that would have given Sneed an automatic appeal under the new sentencing law that went into effect last year.

Another result of the new law is that he will not be eligible for early release, making him 53 when he is released from prison.

Several members of the victims' family said they forgave Sneed. They presented him with nine letters outlining the effects of the two deaths along with family photos and pictures of the accident.

Russo said this was so Sneed could spend the next 15 years contemplating the scale of the harm he inflicted.

Backers, opponents analyze impact of tuition vouchers

By SCOTT STEPHENS
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Like proverbial lions and lambs, opponents and proponents of tuition vouchers shared a small patch of common ground yesterday at Case Western Reserve University.

And if neither side slept easily, there were few outright attacks.

"All of these children belong to all of us," said Lydia Harris, a parochial school principal and voucher proponent who has taught professional development sessions for teachers in public schools. "If I can help two or three public schools, that does not diminish me any."

The two sides met at a conference to analyze the impact — in the courts and in the classroom — of giving state and federal money to religious schools.

The event was sponsored by the CWRU School of Law and Public Policy and the National Committee for Public Education & Religious Liberty, a group that looks askance at the practice of mixing public money with religious causes.

The decision to hold the event in Cleveland was not an accident.

The city is the site of the nation's only program in which public money in the form of tuition vouchers can be used at religious schools.

About 3,000 Cleveland students

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in kindergarten through fourth grade are receiving aid up to \$2,250 to attend private schools this year.

Last May, the Ohio Court of Appeals ruled the program unconstitutional. The Ohio Supreme Court said the program could continue until it rules on an appeal.

Harris, principal at St. Adalbert School in Cleveland, and Imam Da'ud Abdul Malik, executive director of the Islamic School of the Oasis in Cleveland, said their schools offer parents sound curriculum in safe, value-laden environments.

"We're blessed that we're not tied down with political garbage and bureaucracy," said Malik, whose school also accepts voucher pupils.

Voucher opponents such as Michael Charney, a Cleveland middle school teacher, argue the program is an unconstitutional subsidy of religious causes that diverts scarce funds from the public system. Charney said that by accepting public money, religious schools may find themselves under pressure to give up their right to teach their own religious doctrines.

"Public money cannot support telling 5-, 6- or 7-year-olds they can't enter heaven without believing a certain way," Charney said. "Public money means you have to follow public laws."

The morning session was devoted to where the issue stands in the courts. Sending public money to religious schools via vouchers has been found unconstitutional this year in Wisconsin and Ohio. However, the U.S. Supreme Court recently permitted public school teachers to provide remedial and enrichment programs on religious school grounds.

Clarence Page, the event's keynote speaker and a columnist for the Chicago Tribune, said that good or bad, tuition vouchers have at least sparked vigorous debate about public education.

"It seemed to me vouchers were a plan that sounded very attractive as a last resort," said Page, who said he neither supports nor opposes vouchers. "The question is, how many resorts do we have in between?"

Kids learn the ABCs of conflict resolution

By RONALD RUTTI
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

NORTH ROYALTON — Fourth-graders at Albion Elementary School went looking for fights this week. Then they discovered ways to avoid them.

The 100 children participated in a conflict-management session that often put them at center stage, responding to lifelike situations played out for them by actors. The children were prompted to take a deep breath, then use calming, yet direct, words to handle problems.

The program, called Real Alternatives to Violence for Every Student, is sponsored by Kaiser Permanente.

For the most part, the kids seemed to get the message. But not all the responses were what

■ Taming children's tantrums.
Family, 1-E

the instructors hoped for. Two boys, for instance, were asked what they would do if a kid splashed muddy water on their clothes before school.

"If I live close enough, I can go back home and change," one child said. His partner was asked for another option. It was: "We can take his."

Not all situations dealt with something that could prompt violence. Some dealt with daily annoyances, like forgetting homework. Of the two students who were asked what they would do if that happened, one said she would call her mother to have her drop it off. The other got more creative, saying he would tell the teacher, "My dog ate it. He is going to the vet's today. Maybe the vet can get it."

The actors, with degrees in theater and education, are full-time employees of Kaiser's Educational Theatre Troupe. Troupe manager Cassandra Wolfe said the need for anger-management skills became obvious to Kaiser officials from what they were seeing in emergency rooms the last three to five years.

She said fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders were targeted for workshops to try to stem that tide.

The four Albion fourth-grade classes got two mornings each in the workshop held in the school's library. Most of the first day, the seven actors performed skits to show conflict and how to get out of it. The second day, the actors set the tone and had the kids react. They also conducted a game on a giant board the troupe brought with them to get the kids to practice how to handle conflict. Background noises were provided to simulate a TV game show.

"It makes it easier to learn," said Chris Eilmann, 9, who participated yesterday.

Greg Jerman, 9, said he learned one way to avoid conflict with someone is "you look them in the eye and tell them what you think."

"It makes the other person feel sorry," said Sarah Noviks, 9.

Another disarming trick the students learned was to apologize early on for doing something wrong or later for making someone feel bad after confronting them about something they were doing. That seemed to be the hardest tool to grasp.

"Sometimes it's hard to say you're sorry," said Becca Arch, 9. Julie Blasinski said her son, Frank, also 9, loved the workshop when he was there Monday and Tuesday.

"When he comes home, he is one buttoned-up little boy. I can never get anything out of him about school. But he talked about this," Blasinski said.

The workshop cost Albion \$1,200, mostly for materials left by Kaiser. Principal Thomas H. List said the sessions blended well with school conflict-management programs.

Metro

CHARDON

TEACHER'S SETTLEMENT

A longtime Newbury High School teacher who sued a Cleveland contractor for \$6 million after contracting terminal lung cancer from what she claimed was caused by silica dust from the contractor's work at her school settled with the company. Nancy Nelson filed the suit in Geauga County Common Pleas Court against R.A. Ferguson Building Maintenance Corp. for work it did at the school from September through November 1990. In her suit, Nelson said she was subjected to "injurious exposures to chemicals and dust continuously eight hours a day for approximately three months." She said the company failed to take any precautions to protect the building's occupants. She was seeking \$5 million to compensate her for her "massive" medical expenses, lost wages and shortened life expectancy. Nelson's husband, Robert, was asking for \$1 million for expenses and lost consortium. But during a jury trial last week, her attorney, Michael Drain, said they decided to settle after the judge would not allow them to introduce evidence proving there was silica dust at the work site. The attorneys representing Ferguson could not be reached. In a brief filed with the court, the company said there was no evidence that its work generated any silica dust, and that Nelson recalled only one day in which dust allegedly entered her classroom.

CHESTER TOWNSHIP

TREATMENT PLANT PERMIT

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency issued a final discharge permit for the Valley View wastewater treatment plant, to be built at 8215 Mayfield Rd., across from Valley View Dr. The

200,000-gallon-a-day plant will serve about 200 homes and about 120 acres of commercial acreage on U.S. 322 in Chester Township. The treated wastewater will be discharged into Griswold Creek and subsequently to the Chagrin River. County officials hope to have the project completed in two years.

PARKMAN TOWNSHIP

GAZEBO DEDICATION

A new gazebo financed by Parkman Chamber of Commerce fund-raisers will be dedicated at Parkman Memorial Park at 10 a.m. today at U.S. 422 and Ohio 528. Along with the dedication, a time capsule will be buried at the site. Cider and doughnuts will be served.

CLEVELAND

ONE LANE ON INNERBELT WEST

The portion of Interstate 90 westbound known as the Innerbelt Bridge, from the Ontario St. ramp to the Interstate-71 split, will be reduced to one lane from 7 p.m. Monday to 5 a.m. Tuesday to pour concrete. Also the entrance ramps from Ontario St., E. 9th St., E. 14th St. and Interstate 77 northbound to I-90 westbound will be closed. During the night, motorists can avoid the area by heading to I-77 southbound to Interstate 490 westbound and then onto I-71 southbound or I-90 westbound. The Innerbelt Bridge is undergoing a three-year repair program.

GAY CENTER SPEAKER

Richard Burns, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Community Service Center of Greater New York City, will be the featured speaker at 4 p.m. tomorrow during the Lesbian/Gay Community Service Center of Greater Cleveland's annual meeting at the University Club, 3813 Euclid Ave.

Smith campaign pulls in \$62,000 in 5-week period

By ALISON GRANT
and ROBERT J. VICKERS
PLAIN DEALER REPORTERS

In a five-week period, Helen K. Smith has raised \$62,000 for her Cleveland mayoral bid, about \$13,000 of it from members of the Arab-American community.

Mayor Michael R. White said in his State of the City speech in February that he would step up inspections of food sold at neighborhood stores, many of which are owned by Arab-Americans.

"We feel like we've been targeted by the White administration," said Sam Qasem, vice president of the National Arab American Businessmen's Association. "There were a lot of sweeps on the stores."

Qasem said Smith's stance on the Davenport Bluffs also has strong support in the Arab-American community. Smith said property owner James Kassouf should be allowed to build mid-priced hotels on his land there, but White favors a development plan that would exclude them.

Smith's campaign received \$2,000 from the Association of Cleveland Firefighters. Union members say they were initially stonewalled by the White administration when they raised concerns about breathing equipment and malfunctioning fire trucks.

Other unions pitching in included the Bakery and Confectionary Workers International Union, \$5,000; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, \$1,000; Northern Ohio Firefighters, \$1,000; and Cleveland

Police Patrolman's Association, \$250.

Smith also got \$50 from David Lee Rock, the political unknown who ran against White in 1993 and picked up 16 percent of the vote.

White raised \$19,000 in the latest reporting period, but he started with a campaign chest of \$1.1 million, while Smith had just \$11,500 on hand.

Eight of 21 City Council members received aid from the Council Leadership Fund, the political action committee used by Council President Jay Westbrook to support his allies.

Incumbent council members Bill W. Patmon, Charles L. Patton Jr., Roosevelt Coats, Craig E. Willis, Michael A. Dolan, Larry J. Moran, John C. Skrha and Robert J. White III received about \$7,000 each in cash and in-kind services like telemarketing, mailings, printing and designing campaign literature.

Several council members declined contributions, saying they did not want to be publicly associated with Westbrook.

"It's just my understanding that it's tied to giving your support to one person or another, in the ... council presidency" race after the November election, Councilwoman Patricia J. Britt said. "If that's the kind of promise I have to make, I'd just as soon not do that."

Westbrook has said the money is available to any council incumbent with no strings attached.

Greater Cleveland snags share of housing grants

WASHINGTON — Projects in Cleveland, Wellington and Wadsworth were among 272 non-profit housing efforts for senior citizens and the disabled that shared \$595.6 million in grants announced yesterday by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo.

Ohio's share of grants to create 308 apartments for the elderly and 44 units for people with disabilities totaled \$27.3 million.

"By providing shelter to our most vulnerable citizens, we are improving the quality of life and building a better America for everyone," Cuomo said.

In Cleveland, HUD gave the New Jersey-based Multiple Sclerosis Association of America \$1.5 million to build a 17-unit

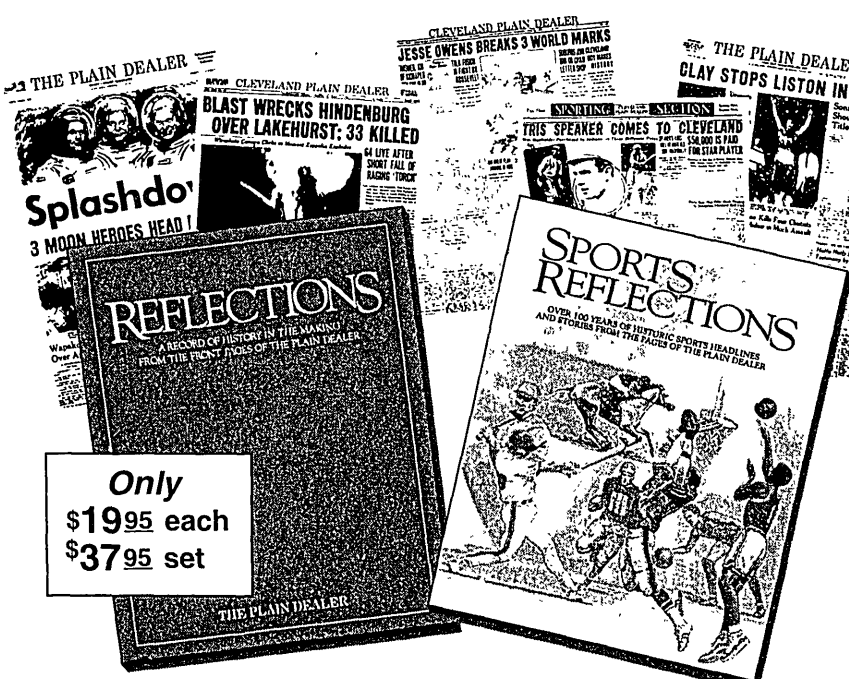
barrier-free independent living facility, along with a 5-year subsidy of \$234,000 for renters.

Akron-based Humility of Mary Housing Inc. got \$3.38 million and a 5-year rental subsidy of \$715,500 to build a 50-unit senior citizen project in Wellington for Lorain County senior citizens.

National Church Residences of Columbus got \$3.53 million and a 5-year rental subsidy of \$744,500 to build a three-story 52-unit building with elevator for senior citizens in Wadsworth.

"America will not turn its back on older Americans and people with disabilities struggling to get by on very low incomes," Cuomo said.

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