

News from the Texas Associated Press

Exhibit on Pope John Paul II to Visit Lubbock

LUBBOCK (AP) — Promoters of a traveling exhibit of artifacts and memorabilia belonging to Pope John Paul II unveiled two items from the pontiff's life Thursday that will be on display when the show opens in Texas next year.

The exhibit will include the coat of arms of John Paul — made up of 21 different types of wood — and a portrait of him in later years waving his right hand.

The show, called "I Have Come to You Again," opens March 15 in Lubbock in West Texas before going on to St. Louis and Washington, D.C., later in 2013. Dates for the stops after Lubbock are not yet set.

The pope's influence on the world is "undeniable," even years after his death in 2005, said the Rev. Malcolm Neyland, a longtime Lubbock-area priest and executive director of the Lubbock-based nonprofit putting on the exhibit.

"This is indeed a first," he said. "Never has the Roman Catholic Church, in hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, offered this

many objects and artifacts of a former pontiff."

Exhibit items will come from the Vatican, Poland and 28 other museums and private collections. Artifacts include the skis and Mass kit that John Paul used on mountain backpacking trips, gifts and art objects presented to him by heads of state, and artwork he collected.

There also will be pictures and mementos from his childhood and pontificate, and historic documents from his papacy. Neyland said the blood-stained shirt John Paul wore when he was shot in 1981 in St. Peter's Square and part of the Berlin Wall also will be displayed.

Four phases will be covered: his childhood and adolescence in Poland from 1920 to 1938 when he was Karol Wojtyla; his years as a laborer, priest, bishop, archbishop and cardinal in his native land from 1939 to 1978; his time as the first Polish Pope of the Roman Catholic Church; and his death through his beatification last year.

The beatification of John Paul by his successor, Benedict XVI, is the last major step before sainthood.

Neyland, who's also president of the nonprofit National Exhibits Association, said nine cardinals have been invited to come to Lubbock for the exhibit.

This is the second exhibit with Vatican ties that has come to Lubbock, a city of more than 220,000 about 350 miles west of Dallas. In 2002, 31 frescoes from the Vatican Museums that had never been displayed brought more than 122,000 people to Lubbock. The frescoes went back to Rome and won't be viewed by the public again until 2025.

Neyland, who said he once lunched with John Paul — they had chicken soup and crackers — at the Vatican about 20 years ago, understands why the pope was so popular, even to those outside the church.

"I think the thing that touched me the most was that charismatic smile that he had," Neyland said earlier this week. "His total attention and concentration on who he was talking to, even as he was facing hundreds of thousands."

The Polish-born pope displayed a common touch and keen understanding of the power of symbolism, which inspired even those who sharply disagreed with him on issues of faith. Many people seemed to warm to him and regarded him as genuinely holy even if they did not share his religious beliefs.

John Paul, who died at the age of 84, was the Vatican's most-traveled pontiff, visiting 129 countries during his nearly 27-year papacy. He captured the world's affection like no other pope.

The media savvy pontiff also entered the homes of hundreds of millions of faithful on television and many developed a deep affection for the kindhearted old man with the uncanny charisma.

He sought out the young, the poor, the oppressed — and they responded. At his funeral, crowds pleaded with the church to declare him a saint.

Lawsuit Filed in Midland Veterans Parade Wreck

LUBBOCK (AP) — Two Army veterans and their wives on Wednesday sued the railroad company whose train hit a truck carrying veterans and their spouses during a parade in Texas.

Four veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan were killed and 16 more people were injured in the Nov. 15 collision. They had been riding on a flatbed truck in the parade organized to honor wounded veterans for their military service and were in the process of crossing the tracks when the crash happened. Officials have said the truck entered the crossing after the warning signals began sounding.

The lawsuit was filed by Richard Sanchez and Todd King and their wives, but one of their attorneys said he expects other veterans to join it. He said the lawsuit was filed with just two couples because steps needed to be taken quickly to preserve evidence.

The lawsuit claims negligence and recklessness on the part of Union Pacific Railroad Inc. and Smith Industries Inc., the company that owned the truck, led to the collision. It was filed in Midland, where the crash happened.

The veterans have not asked for a specific amount in damages because their "No. 1 desire is that no accident like this ever happens again," said Bob Pottroff, one of the attorneys representing the two couples.

The lawsuit claims the railroad

was negligent in 28 ways, including failing to provide reasonable and timely audible and visual warning of the approaching train and failure to provide a safe railroad crossing. It also says the train did not brake or otherwise attempt to slow and the railroad hadn't fixed what it claims are hazardous conditions posed by the road grade.

Union Pacific spokeswoman Raquel Espinoza-Williams said the company would not comment on the lawsuit specifically, but she noted in an email that federal investigators have already determined the truck moved onto the tracks after the red flashing lights and bells activated.

"Disregarding active warning signals is extremely dangerous, and we urge drivers to stop once the red flashing lights and bells activate," she wrote.

The lawsuit accuses Smith Industries of having a driver who, among other things, failed to keep a proper lookout and didn't exercise reasonable care for the veterans on the truck's trailer.

The attorney representing Smith Industries, Jimmie B. Todd of Odessa, was away on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

The driver of the truck, 50-year-old Dale Andrew Hayden of Midland, is an Army veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and is employed by Smith Industries.

Also Wednesday, the Texas Department of Transportation released documents showing the crossing's warning system was designed to become operational at least 30 seconds before the arrival of trains. On the day of the crash, only 20 seconds elapsed from the time the system was activated to the train's arrival, according to the NTSB.

Twenty seconds meets federal guidelines, but railroads can — and do — provide longer intervals at some crossings.

The documents, released to The Associated Press and other media organizations in response to requests under the Texas Public Information Act, do not show whether the crossing had been upgraded or altered since it was completed in 1991.

A TxDOT official said in an email released with the documents that the crossing was designed for trains that went up to 25 mph, but they now travel on that line at up to 70 mph. Darin Kosmak, section director for the department's rail-highway division, wrote in the email to TxDOT's legal counsel that the state expected the railroad to upgrade its safety mechanism to match the greater speeds, but had not verified that changes were made.

Espinoza-Williams said in an email that the design documents released by the state "do not reflect current conditions at the ... crossing, which clearly has more than six trains per day operating at a maximum speed of more than 25 mph."

Troopers Back at Work Following Andrews Shooting

ODESSA (AP) — Three Texas Department of Public Safety agents stationed in Andrews have returned to duty following an officer-involved shooting that started after a New Mexico woman tried to hit them with her vehicle, officials said.

The woman, Ashley Grado, was released from the hospital last week and was charged with three counts of aggravated assault on a peace

officer with a deadly weapon as well as a felony drug possession charge, according to DPS spokesperson Tom Vinger.

Grado, 905 N. Fourth St., Artesia, N.M., was being held Thursday at Andrews County Jail on a \$1.25 million bond.

The shooting happened around 6:15 p.m. Nov. 14 in the ALCO Discount Store parking lot near the intersection of North Main Street and Northwest Avenue K during a DPS narcotics investigation, according to DPS reports after the incident.

When agents identified themselves to Grado, 26, of Artesia, N.M., and 19-year-old Eric Carrasco of Midland and tried to make an arrest, Grado began to flee the scene and tried to hit the agents with her vehicle, the DPS said in a previous statement. The officers fired guns at the vehicle, wounding Grado before she eventually crashed her vehicle.

The agents involved were Justin House, Kerry Vore and Jerrod Bell, and all were placed on leave after the shooting per standard procedure, Vinger said Thursday in an email. All three agents work in the Criminal Investigations Division.

The Odessa American previously reported, incorrectly, that just one trooper was involved and placed on leave.

The Texas Rangers continue to investigate the incident.

Grado was transported to Medical Center Hospital by helicopter. Carrasco was transported to the Andrews County Jail where he was charged with possession of a firearm by a felon and manufacturing or delivering methamphetamine, the DPS said.

Carrasco, 6501 W Shawney Drive, Midland, was being held Thursday at Andrews County Jail on a total \$120,000 bond.

Texas Peanut Farmers Victims of N.M. Plant Closure

LUBBOCK — Earlier this week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suspended Portales, N.M. based Sunland, Inc.'s registration as a food facility — an execution of the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011 to ensure the safety of food products for Americans.

However, yet to be acknowledged are the many Texas farmers still waiting for payment on the peanuts they have contracted and delivered to the company.

Sunland is the country's largest organic peanut butter manufacturer and specializes in processing Valencia peanuts — a low-yielding variety that requires extra attention to ensure the crop's success.

"Farmers are the unintentional victims of FDA's closure of the plant," TPPB Executive Director Shelly Nutt said. "The men and women who worked hard nurturing their peanut crop this past year are left wondering when or even if they will be paid."

"I know farming is uncertain," Haldon Messamore, a farmer in Sudan, said. "I plan for drought, wind, hail, early freeze and fluctuating markets. But I didn't plan on getting caught in the middle of a battle

between a big food company and big government agency."

The situation needs to be resolved in a timely fashion, according to Brent Nelson, another farmer from Sudan.

"There seems to be a major disconnect between FDA and Sunland in resolving this issue," Nelson said.

Though Sunland may have insurance or reserves to sustain itself through the coming months until the situation is resolved, farmers cannot continue waiting to be paid for their peanuts.

"What other business or household could continue if one-third of their revenue is in limbo?" Messamore said.

The financial burden this is placing on farmers doesn't just stop with them and their families; it goes on to the businesses and communities supported by them.

"There's a ripple effect of who is impacted by this," Brent Nelson, a farmer from Sudan, explained. "It may start with the farmers, but it goes on to the people we do business with and the causes we donate to. From equipment dealers and bankers to restaurants and churches, there's no part of the community that remains untouched by this situation."

"I'm getting calls from nervous landlords and lenders who want answers, and I have none," Messamore said.

While we need to have measures in place to ensure a safe food supply for consumers, the process needs to move at a pace that will relieve the farmers' financial burden soon.

"I know FDA was aiming at Sunland but their shot hit the farmers too," Nutt said. "Something needs to be done soon to address the economic hardships this has caused for farmers in the region."

LCSO Deputy Shot During Warrant Service Saturday

HOBBS, N.M. (AP) — A man arrested in the shooting of a Lea County sheriff's deputy is a person of interest in two recent Chaves County murders.

The Associated Press reports that Chaves County Sheriff's Department says Juan Uribe-Vidal is a person of interest in a double homicide case that claimed the life of 48-year-old Mark Walters. The name of the other victim has not been released.

Uribe-Vidal and James Gomez were arrested last Saturday morning for aggravated battery and aggravated assault on a police officer after deputies say they shot at authorities serving a search warrant.

The incident occurred on E. Everglade in Hobbs, around 12:30 a.m.

Authorities say Lea County Sheriff's Sgt. Michael Tovar was shot in the arm and neck. He was airlifted to a Lubbock, hospital, where he was treated and released.

It was unclear if Uribe-Vidal or Gomez had attorneys.

News Briefs

SHS to Host Financial Aid Meeting Monday

An evening of financial aid assistance has been slated for this Tuesday evening (Dec. 4), at the Seminole High School campus.

According to school officials, Earl Hudgins from Panhandle-Plains Management & Servicing Corp. will give a financial aid presentation.

The event will begin at 5 p.m. at the SHS Activity Center.

A \$200 scholarship drawing will be held at the presentation, and you must be present to win.

For more information about the presentation, contact the SHS campus at (432) 758-5873.

Gaines FSA Office Selling Windbreak Trees

The Gaines County Soil and Water Conservation District is sponsoring a windbreak tree project in cooperation with the Texas Forest Service for 2012/2013.

You may place your order for trees in person at the Gaines County USDA/FSA Service Center located at 1301 South Main. Payment must be made when your order is placed.

This year's evergreen trees are: Afghanistan Pine, Austrian Pine, Pinyon Pine, Oriental Arborvitae, Lacebark Elm, Four Wing Saltbush, and Italian Stone Pine, Desert Willow. Evergreens are sold in multiples of 30 seedlings.

Hardwood Species available include American Plum, Black Cherry, Green Ash, Hackberry, Honey locust, Bur oak, Chinkapin Oak, Post Oak, Shumard Oak, Osage Orange, Pecan, Red Mulberry, Redbud, Sand Plum, Aromatic Sumac, Smooth Sumac. Hardwoods are sold in multiples of 25 seedlings. Delivery of the seedlings is

scheduled for Thursday, February 28, 2013. All orders will need to be placed by noon on Wednesday, February 20, 2013.

Windbreak trees provide a variety of benefits ranging from controlling wind erosion in fields to decorating around homes.

For more information please contact the Gaines County Soil and Water Conservation District located at 1301 S. Main in the USDA/FSA Service Center or call 758-3722, extension 3.

Gaines Museum to Host Open House Dec. 10th

Friends of the Gaines County Museum announces sponsorship of the Fifth Annual December "Open House," which will pay tribute to art students in the Seminole Elementary School.

Ms. Lee Nell Mayes' 5th grade art students will be displayed throughout the museum, and the public is invited to the yearly event, scheduled to be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 10.

Attendance is free of charge, and refreshments will be served.

The annual event is a "come and go" function giving the visitor time to view the children's art work.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to see new exhibits and historical items relating to the five cultures that help define our unique history.

Mark your calendars and meet us at the museum on Dec. 10 for an interesting evening at the museum with good food, fellowship, and a look at the art work of our young artists.

For those who missed the dedication of Seminole artist Jammey Huggins' sculpture "Wind Spirit," it is now located in the lobby entrance for easy viewing.

For more information call the Gaines County Museum at (432) 758 4016 or send your inquiry to: seminolemuseum@co.gaines.tx.us.

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