

Texas hazing charge cites water as a 'deadly weapon'

by Michael Grabbell
The Dallas Morning News

Eight men could face up to 20 years in prison on a charge that they assaulted Southern Methodist University fraternity pledges with an unusual deadly weapon: water.

In a Dallas apartment last month, Braylon Curry and another fraternity pledge were forced to drink hot sauce and gallons of water and were beaten with wooden paddles, authorities said.

Curry, an SMU junior, went into a coma, suffering from pulmonary edema, a condition in which water enters the lungs, and hyponatremia, a sodium imbalance brought on by excess fluid consumption, doctors said.

"If they refused to drink, if they stopped drinking, if they weren't drinking fast enough, they were beaten with paddles," said Bill Turnage, a deputy Dallas po-

lice chief in the northeast division.

Dallas police arrested three men Monday and have issued arrest warrants for five more connected with the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

SMU students Brandon Perry and Cornelius Smith were taken into custody in their dormitory rooms. A former member, Uche Kalu, 23, was arrested at his apartment.

One student who has not been arrested attends another area college, police said. The others are former members of the fraternity.

Hazing experts and attorneys said the case appears to be the first in Texas in which water has been considered a deadly weapon. The weight of the felony charges is unusual for hazing cases and could challenge the state's definition of "deadly weapon," they said.

"When the Legislature wrote that statement, they didn't know it was going to be used for water and for air," said Greg Westfall, a criminal defense attorney in

Fort Worth. "We're seeing more and more folks getting creative with how high they can make the offense."

Texas law defines a deadly weapon as anything that in the manner of its use or intended use is capable of causing death or serious bodily injury.

To prove their case, prosecutors will have to show that the fraternity members knew the dangers of drinking too much water.

SMU officials said the university had held an educational anti-hazing event the Friday before the Nov. 14 incident and published a half-page advertisement of Texas hazing law in the campus newspaper that day.

"They had prior knowledge that consuming that much water could cause death or serious bodily injury," Deputy Chief Turnage said.

In a similar incident in Plattsburgh, N.Y., 11 members of a State University of New York fraternity were charged with a combined 172 charges, ranging from conspiracy to criminally negligent homicide, after an

18-year-old student died from drinking excessive amounts of water through a funnel.

The students all pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of hazing. One student faces a year in jail, was expelled from the university and was ordered to pay thousands of dollars for an educational video on the dangers of hazing.

In Texas, vehicles, fists and pencils have been classified as deadly weapons.

"We have had cases in Texas before where items were declared deadly weapons, and I'm not really sure should have been," said Cynthia Orr of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

She pointed to a 2000 case in Austin in which a man was charged with giving cocaine to a minor 20 to 30 times. The court found that cocaine was not a deadly weapon because the man did not intend to injure the victim and because the minor ingested the cocaine voluntarily, she said.

Students look north to Canada, where quality education costs less

by Patricia Alex
The Record

McGill University has been called "the Harvard of the North" and, indeed, the Montreal school has a reputation that ranks with the American Ivies.

Except for the price tag. The full freight at Harvard - tuition, room and board - is nearly \$38,000, compared with \$12,000 (U.S.) for McGill.

American enrollment in Canadian universities is up about 86 percent in the past four years to more than 5,000 students, according to the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

It's not exactly a groundswell - the number pales compared with the 23,000 Canadians who study in the United States annually - but the word is out that there are good educational buys to be had north of the border.

"I'm very happy I made this choice," said Sally Warner, an engineering student from South Orange, N.J., who attends McGill. "I didn't even apply to the Ivies because I didn't want to shell out \$40,000."

Warner ranked second in her class and scored more than 1400 on her SATs - stats that would have put her on good footing at the best of American schools.

But McGill added up for her, in more ways than one. She loves the cosmopolitan flair of French-speaking Montreal, where housing prices are a fraction of those in the New York area. She pays about \$200 U.S. a month for a share in a modern, centrally located apartment. Seven hours by car is not such a long schlep home, and the drinking age is 18 in Quebec.

Because she is a Canadian citizen by virtue of her mother's place of birth, Warner's resident tuition at McGill is about \$6,000 U.S. annually. "It was cheaper than going to Rutgers," she said. "And I love it."

The increase in American students attending college in Canada is fueled, in part, by aggressive recruiting campaigns by schools such as

McGill. And, in fact, about a third of the American students in Canada are at McGill. About 1,500 of the 30,000 students at McGill are American.

The language is familiar, except at some predominantly French universities in Quebec, and student visa and entrance requirements generally aren't too burdensome. Coursework and scheduling are similar to universities in the United States, and Canadian degrees are generally respected and portable.

"An undergraduate degree from our university is very competitive for admissions to graduate schools in the U.S.," said Jo-Anne Brady, registrar at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario.

If anything, the large Canadian universities get a rap for larger class sizes, but generally they are academically rigorous and American students find themselves competing with Canadian counterparts who are often very well-prepared for college. Unlike American undergraduates, students at many large Canadian universities must declare majors as freshmen.

To be sure, Canadian recruiters are helped by the good academics that their publicly funded universities enjoy. And the relative strength of the U.S. dollar has worked in their favor when courting American families.

"It's a great value," said Eve Jacobs of Verona, whose daughter Rachel is a McGill graduate. "We have a kid now at Cornell, and I can't compare it money-wise."

Michele Papavasiliou has also turned northward in search of a "good education for the dollar." She traveled a month ago to check out universities in Canada with her son Jesse, a high school junior. Jesse plans to apply to both McGill and Queens.

"He is looking for a foreign experience," said the mom. "The thing about Canada is, you can be in a foreign country and still take the bus home. ... To me, it's the best of both worlds."

If you're into snow, that is. "You really have to like winter to go to school up there," Papavasiliou allows.

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