

STATE

Watson is Miss Texas

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Tara Watson, a 22-year-old senior at Texas Christian University who represented Hurst-Euless-Bedford, has won the Miss Texas Scholarship Pageant.

Watson, who competed against 56 other women for the title, will represent Texas at the Miss America Pageant this fall in Atlantic City, N.J.

"I've never been more excited in my whole life," Watson, who is from Lufkin, said Saturday night after receiving her crown.

Her platform was AIDS awareness and education. She sang the song "I've Got a Crush on You" for the talent portion of the competition.

The first runner-up was Miss Oak Cliff, Brooke Buie of Garland. Others in the top five were: second runner-up, Miss Harris County, Tori White of Dallas; third runner-up, Miss Fort Worth, Marshawn Evans of Richardson; and fourth runner-up, Miss Gulf Coast, Fort Worth-native Cindy Elizondo. As Miss Texas 2000, Watson



AP photo

NEW MISS TEXAS: Tara Watson is crowned Miss Texas at the Will Rogers Auditorium in Fort Worth Saturday night.

will receive a \$10,000 scholarship and a Chevrolet Blazer.

Rounding out the top 10 were Miss Amarillo Area, Meranda Carter of Jefferson; Miss Collin County, Georgia Locke of

Corrigan; Miss Dallas, Morgan Matlock of Coppell; Miss Lubbock, Angie Clark of Dallas; and Miss River Oaks, Lisa Dalzell of Kingwood.

Feds respond to Waco request

WACO, Texas (AP) — The issue of whether or not government agents fired at the Branch Davidian compound at the end of the standoff seven years ago should not be considered as part of a multimillion-dollar wrongful death lawsuit, government lawyers have argued again.

They contend, in a motion filed late Friday, that the findings of experts hired by plaintiffs in the \$675 million case either were "unscientifically based" or "backwards," and therefore did not warrant consideration.

Before the current trial began, U.S. District Judge Walter S. Smith Jr., citing a report written by his court-appointed expert, said that accusations that government gunfire contributed to deaths at the end of the fiery Branch Davidian siege may not be allowed in the case.

However, Smith allowed the Davidians' lawyers additional time to offer "any additional evidence" to support their claim that repeated flashes on an FBI infrared videotape recorded in 1993 came from government gunfire.

Vector Data Systems Ltd., a British firm that examined the tape at the request of Smith, said the flashes were reflections from the ground cause by sunlight, not gunfire.

I. William Ginsberg, a government-appointed expert from the Department of Energy, said the flashes on the tape lasted too long to be gun muzzle blasts and could only be reflections. Also, there weren't any agents visible on the tape during the siege.

"The complete absence of discernible personnel during the times at issue, coupled with the ability to detect personnel in the vicinity later in the tape, after the fire trucks are on scene, supports the conclusion that the flashes are not caused by muzzle blasts," Ginsberg concluded in his study.

"Gunfire can be ruled out mathematically as the source of

90 percent of the flashes on the FLIR tape ...," the government wrote in its latest motion to have the gunfire issue removed from the lawsuit.

But according to experts hired by Branch Davidian attorneys, the government analysis is flawed.

They said Ginsberg only looked at the number of rounds fired per minute by M-16 machine guns to reach their conclusions that no shots were fired. They said Ginsberg's study failed to mention that federal agents didn't even use that type of weapon, and failed to address the flashes other gun types used by agents may have created.

The government is defending itself in the lawsuit brought by surviving Branch Davidians and family members. Some 80 sect members died from either fire or gunshots as the compound erupted into flames, ending a 51-day standoff April 19, 1993.

Davidian lawyers said they were being denied a fair chance to challenge the findings of Ginsberg and three Vector experts, David Oxless, Nick Evans and Peter Ayers.

Smith barred the gunfire issue from the trial last month before the proceedings started, saying he wanted to speak with Oxless and have him review the study to help resolve the issues before admitting it into court.

Another Vector employee who was chief analyst for the court-ordered study has been recovering from prostate surgery and will be unable to travel to the U.S. until later this month.

Smith, who is currently hearing the trial along with five jurors, has said he may consider the gunfire issue later. The jury will act only as an advisory panel to the judge, who will deliver the verdict in the case, which could end this week.

A court-ordered field test in March simulated aspects of the siege using heat-sensing FLIR, or forward-looking infrared, equipment. Vector concluded

the flashes were indeed reflections from sunlight as it struck debris on the complex. But Davidian lawyers insist gunfire created the flashes.

While gunfire on the final day of the siege may never be discussed in the current trial, other issues have been raised by plaintiffs.

They say federal agents violated an approved plan on the standoff's final day when tanks punched holes in the building, contributed to or caused at least some of the three fires that engulfed the compound, and failed to have firefighting equipment at the scene.

They contend the government also fired indiscriminately into the Mount Carmel compound while unsuccessfully trying to serve search and arrest warrants on sect leader David Koresh Feb. 28, 1993. Six Davidians and four ATF agents died in the initial raid.

Government attorneys say the agents simply were defending their lives when they were caught off guard and ambushed by sect members.

They say sect members had 51 days to leave the compound. And when most didn't, agents performing a tear-gassing operation to flush out Davidians acted within the scope of a plan approved by Attorney General Janet Reno.

Biblical Arts exhibit offends some

DALLAS (AP) — A test audience's negative reaction to the abundant nudity in an exhibit by Edward Knippers and one painting's perceived anti-abortion theme has to the cancellation of a show of the artist's work, the Biblical Arts Center said.

"After the testing, we felt like it was not appropriate for our patrons," said Scott Peck, co-director of the nonprofit center in North Dallas. "This is the first time we've had to do this."

The exhibit, "Passionate Grace," was canceled because of the criticisms of the vast majority of people previewing the show, Peck said. More than 40 regular patrons and tourists got an early look at the show, which was scheduled to begin Tuesday and included about 30 paintings.

"Even those who said something positive about the paintings also had negative feelings," Peck is quoted as saying in Sunday's editions of The Dallas Morning News. "Some people were moved,

but they were also offended by some of it."

Knippers, who could not be reached for comment at his Virginia home, is known for large-scale paintings of biblical scenes in which many of the subjects, including Christ, are nude.

The museum warned in an article in The News before the exhibit's scheduled opening, "The artist believes that illustrating the biblical account without the specifics of period dress shows our common humanity."

Officials with the Biblical Arts Center said they were aware that Knippers' work had stirred controversy elsewhere and decided to use a test audience to gauge the response.

One of the paintings that inspired strong feelings was Massacre of the Innocent, an interpretation of King Herod's declaration that all newborns in Israel be killed. Peck said members of the test audience interpreted the work as an anti-abortion statement.

SA firefighter works for truant lieutenant

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — City fire officials are investigating an arrangement where one firefighter has worked nearly 4,200 hours for another one over a two-year period.

Log books for Station 46 show that between June 1, 1998, and May 31, 2000, Ralph Arredondo worked nearly 4,200 hours for Lt. Richard Willborn in addition to pulling almost all his own 56-hour weekly assignments.

That works out to about 40 hours a week of extra time, for which Arredondo was not paid by the city, according to the San Antonio Express-News.

Arredondo also worked many extra shifts for other firefighters.

Over the same 24 months, Willborn, who owns a landscaping business that grosses about \$1 million annually, was paid as a full-time firefighter even though he clocked only about 700 hours, about 15 percent of his assigned time, according to the log books.

City firefighters are allowed to swap shifts. But according to the Station 46 records, Willborn has not worked any shifts for Arredondo over the past two years.

Firefighters are forbidden to miss a shift for outside employment reasons and are prohibited

from paying another firefighter to cover their shift — an arrangement Willborn denies existed between he and Arredondo.

"He doesn't get anything. I've never paid him a penny," Willborn told the Express-News. "He said he's doing me a favor because he knows I'm in trouble and that's what he's there for. I believe he deserves a medal."

Arredondo refused to say if he was paid for the extensive work hours and referred questions to the chief's office.

In response to media inquiries, department officials said they've begun an investigation and have suspended Arredondo's right to work for others until they sort things out.

"There was something on the order of 20 days worked straight (by Arredondo). I don't know if they were full shifts, but it raises a concern with me for safety," said Rodney Hitzfelder, fire department chief of operations.

The situation at Station 46 is resented by other city firefighters who believe Willborn has long enjoyed preferential treatment by department brass, according to one veteran who asked to remain nameless.

"He's not acting like a fireman. He's never there," the firefighter

said. "He needs to step aside and let a fireman have it, a fireman who will actually fight fires."

San Antonio firefighters typically work 24 hours and then get 48 hours off. Missing a shift to work an outside job is taboo, and those who are caught are punished.

Last year several city firefighters were briefly suspended when Chief Robert Ojeda learned they had traded shifts to work security at an out-of-town convention.

Willborn, 50, who makes approximately \$52,000 and expects to retire this fall with a pension of roughly \$43,000 and full medical benefits, said family problems and legal issues have forced him to take so much time off over the past two years.