

# Station Break

BY DAN TRIGOB OFF

## SPLIT DECISION

Raleigh TV stations were divided on whether to run the 911 tape of a distraught woman calling in the suicide death of her husband.

Reporters were already involved in the story because, a day before, Derril Willard's home had been searched in connection with an investigation of the arsenic-poisoning death of another man. Reporters were staking out Willard's home at the time of the call. The tape was released the following day.

"I thought [running the tape] was gratuitous ... sensational," said WLFL(TV) News Director Jonathan Knopf, who broke ranks with other stations. "We had reported the death the day before.

"What news is there involving the arsenic investigation? This affects only their family. Had we not reported the death already, it might be different. But we still probably wouldn't have run the tape."

But other stations disagreed. "We felt running the tape advanced the story," said Rob Elmore, news director at WTVD(TV), citing a remark by the caller that suggested a time frame for the suicide.

All stations appeared in agreement that the recorded screams of a child were properly left out of the broadcasts.

"I'm not trying to be a maverick," said Knopf. "There's a tendency to want to run everything—for so long, information was so hard to get. But we are mistaken if we run every-

thing without thinking. I didn't feel this was proper, but I can't decide what [others] do."

## STATIONS SHED GAG

Responding to a petition by Albuquerque, N.M., media, including TV stations KRQE(TV) and KOAI-TV, the New Mexico Supreme Court lifted a gag order on parties and witnesses in the case of a 3-year-old who was taken from her parents after state officials believed the parents had not dealt with the child's obesity.

Trial Judge Tommy Jewell had not lifted the order even though the case against the parents had been dismissed and

even though the parents had gone public—initially to KRQE's Andrea Thompson—voluntarily before the court proceedings.

According to KRQE attorney Marty Esquivel, the judge created something the judge called "a stipulated gag order," in which the participants agreed not to talk to the media.

"I'm a media attorney, and I've never heard these terms," he said. But, Esquivel added, the parents' attorney claimed not to have attended a meeting on the gag order nor did the family agree to it. Still, he said, he had to go to the state Supreme Court three times to get the order lifted.

KRQE News Director Dan Salamone commented, "We have always felt that the gag order was inappropriate and was unnecessary. And it was extraordinary that, even when there was no longer a criminal proceeding, the judge would have the audacity to suggest the gag order was still in effect."

## DROP THAT CAMERA

A Wilmington, N.C., TV cameraman was detained at gunpoint and handcuffed by police who mistook him for a robbery suspect last week.

WVAY-TV's Michael Pelzer beat police to the scene at the Marshalls department store where the robbery was believed to have taken place. Pelzer was having lunch in the same mall.

Although Pelzer apparently matched elements of the description—the only black man with a cell phone in

view—and was stopped and cuffed by a new officer, other officers who knew Pelzer arrived soon after and vouched for him, effecting his release.

Pelzer, could not be reached, but Executive Producer Chris Ruffin said the photographer was not angered—despite having been mistaken for a criminal suspect three previous times—and was able to laugh about the incident later. "He was probably talking to me on the cell phone" when police stopped him, said Ruffin.

## CRASH KILLS KWTV SPORTS DIRECTOR

Bill Teegins, sports director for KWTV Oklahoma City and the radio voice of Oklahoma State University sports, was killed Saturday night in the Colorado plane crash that also killed two Oklahoma State basketball players and seven others. The plane was returning from the OSU-Colorado basketball game in Boulder.

The station called Teegins "a pro in every respect and a friend everyone respected." "He loved doing the OSU calls, whether it be basketball or football," said David Griffin, president and general manager of KWTV.

"His is a great loss, as is everybody aboard that plane. He will be missed by everybody here at News9."

*All news is local. Contact Dan Trigoboff at (301) 260-0923, e-mail [dtrig@erols.com](mailto:dtrig@erols.com), or fax (202) 463-3742.*



### Rapid rise

Joy Purdy, who joined WFOR-TV Miami as a reporter and fill-in anchor only last October, will become a weekday anchor at noon and 5:30 p.m. WFOR-TV News Director Shannon High-Bassalik said that, "as a back-up anchor, she has demonstrated tremendous poise and presence. We've always known she would be an ideal candidate for an anchor position."