

Buying 'crack' in N.Y./6A • Committee roasts journalists/1B • EOA out of business/14A

Partly cloudy  
High 95, low 72  
Details on 2A

# Arkansas Gazette.

THURSDAY  
Final

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LITTLE ROCK, THURSDAY, JULY 10, 1986

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## In the News

■ Mayor Raymond L. Flynn of Boston imposed a night curfew on the Boston Common, the United States' oldest park, because of gambling, drug dealing, robbery and violence that has turned it into a crime area.

■ President Reagan, a former actor, said at Washington he sees nothing wrong with television evangelist Pat Robertson seeking the presidency, contending that no "legitimate trades or professions should be barred from participation in public life. That's the meaning of democracy."

■ George P. Shultz, the secretary of State, suggested at Washington the news media could help the Reagan administration's campaign against international terrorism by showing more restraint in covering that issue.

■ Rochelle Yuga, a 6-foot resident of Houston, was crowned at St. Louis as the new Miss Tall International during an annual pageant sponsored by Tall Clubs International, a nationwide organization of women at least 5 feet 10 inches tall and men at

## PCB-tainted oil spills on I-40 after collision

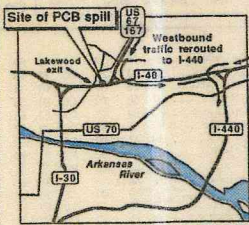
A flatbed truck carrying three large electric transformers that contained cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, collided with another vehicle about 7:16 a.m. Wednesday in the

nated oil was spilled from a transformer that ruptured and fell off the truck.

### 'A major spill'

Richard Merritt, a state Pollution Control and Ecology Department spokesman, said Department officials considered the accident "a major spill."

Dick Kale, the Pollution Control and Ecology Department emergency response co-ordinator, estimated early Wednesday evening that 400 gallons had spilled, but Tom Meehan of Lakeville, Minn., president of National Electric, Inc., which was transporting the transformers, said later that most of the 455 gallons of PCB-tainted oil in the transformer that ruptured was held in a spill containment pan on the truck bed. A second transformer on the truck



—Staff Map by Patt. Clark

westbound lanes of Interstate 40 just east of the Lakewood-North Hills Boulevard overpass at North Little Rock, and PCB-contami-

(See SPILL on Page 17A.)



—Staff Photo by Michael D. Smith

Transformer lies on interstate, with oil spreading out, about an hour after accident.

# Spill

Continued from Page 1A.

"sprung a leak" that "was stopped right away" and none of the oil from it spilled on the ground, he said.

### Lanes closed

The westbound lanes of I-40 were closed immediately from Interstate 440 west to the Lakewood exit. By Wednesday night the closed area was the westbound lanes between Prothro Junction to the state Highway 107 exits on I-40 and U.S. Highway 67-167 southbound from McCain Boulevard to I-40.

The complete cleanup operation is expected to take at least until this afternoon. It wasn't known late Wednesday when any of the closed lanes would reopen.

Two 15-member crews were planning to work through the night on the cleanup operation, Kale said.

Sgt. Bill Young, a State Police

### • Agency records on loads not precise, Page 7A.

spokesman, said the accident occurred in the westbound lanes of I-40 near where U.S. Highway 67-167 intersects with the interstate. Young said the tractor-trailer truck, owned by National Electric at Coffeyville, Kan., was driven by John Campbell, 43, of Nowata, Okla., a National Electric employe.

### Tried to change lanes

Young said the accident occurred when Campbell tried to change lanes on the interstate and collided with a Jeep Cherokee driven by Billy L. Mitchell, 44, of Vilonia (Faulkner County). Neither vehicle overturned. The Cherokee, which was struck on the right front fender, came to rest on the south shoulder of the interstate with the front of the vehicle pointed down the incline at the edge of the shoulder. After the collision, Campbell kept the truck under control and stopped on the north shoulder of the interstate.

Campbell wasn't hurt and Mitchell was treated for minor head injuries at Memorial Hospital at North Little Rock and released.

Young said Campbell was cited for attempting an improper lane change.

Kale said traffic passing over the spilled liquid Wednesday morning had splashed some of the oil into a ditch on a 75-foot stretch along the north side of the inter-

state. A 200-foot stretch of the interstate was "pretty coated" with the oil, PC and E's Merritt said.

Meehan said a 400- to 500-foot section of the highway was coated with an absorbent material to soak up the oil and then the highway was being cleaned with solvents. The absorbent material will be vacuumed up and placed in barrels.

Meehan said dirt was being excavated from a depth of three inches to a foot in two patches about 12 feet wide and 10 feet long along the highway. About 100 55-gallon drums of the contaminated soil will be shipped to the Coffeyville facility and then transferred to other waste disposal sites, he said. Fill dirt near the I-40 Lakewood exit will be used to replace the contaminated soil, Kale said.

Meehan said that when the truck swerved after the collision, the three transformers on the bed shifted and the extra tension against the chains and binders apparently broke a fin on the transformer that fell to the highway. The oil that was contained on the truck was pumped into 55-gallon barrels, he said.

### Banned in 1977

PCBs are an insulating oil used as a heat retardant in electric transformers and capacitors until 1977, when they were banned by Congress. The oil is about the consistency of motor oil but is clear. PCBs have been shown to cause cancer, liver damage, birth deformities and other adverse health effects in laboratory animals.

The maximum acceptable level of PCBs the federal Environmental Protection Agency will permit in transformers or capacitors is 50 parts per million and, according to Merritt, most transformers that contain PCBs have up to 200,000 parts per million. "It varies, according to the kind of transformer it is," Merritt said. The level of PCBs in the transformers that ruptured on I-40 hadn't been determined, he said.

Merritt said the three transformers on the truck each had a capacity of 450 gallons.

Merritt said "quite a number" of motorists drove through the spilled oil. Pollution Control and state Health Department officials were advising those motorists who drove through the oil to go to an "unmanned, not a hands-on," automatic car wash. He said the automatic scrubbers would remove most of the oil, but a PCB odor would linger. "That will dissipate if they leave the car outside," he said. Kale said the odor was comparable to gasoline or other petroleum-based products.

Merritt said the area on the interstate where the spill occurred

## PCBs are suspected cause of variety of health problems

Polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, which were spilled on Interstate 40 Wednesday, are contained in a heavy, oily chemical compound that once was widely used to cool and insulate heavy electrical equipment, often in mixtures with solvents.

PCBs can build up in the food chain and are suspected of causing liver cancer, skin lesions, chloracne, birth abnormalities, mutations and other health problems. PCBs are toxic to fish at very low levels and the survival rate and reproductive success of fish can be adversely affected in the presence of any level of PCBs.

PCBs were first produced in the United States in 1935 by Monsanto. In 1971, Monsanto voluntarily ceased all sales of PCBs for all uses except in electrical capacitors and transformers — uses that, at the time, were thought to be environmentally safe. Congress banned their manufacture in 1977 and further sale or new use of PCBs was banned in 1979.

Capacitors store electrical current for future use and transformers convert current from a primary circuit into a variation of voltages and currents in a secondary circuit.

While PCBs intentionally were produced in the past, they still are produced in minute quantities as unintentional by-products and process impurities in the manufacture of various other chemicals and compounds.

would have to be diked, to prevent migration of the PCBs when a cleansing agent was applied to the highway. The liquid also will be vacuumed into drums, Merritt said.

Meehan said that after a section of highway was cleaned, samples of the concrete would be sent to the Pollution Control Department, which will have the final say on whether it was sufficiently clean.

Merritt said he didn't think any of the pavement would have to be taken up because any PCB residue that remained after the highway was cleaned would deteriorate within a matter of days because of exposure to the sunlight.

### Firm sends experts

Immediately after they were notified of the PCB spill, officials of National Electric at Coffeyville sent a team of experts to North Little Rock to investigate and prepare for cleanup operations. Young, the State Police spokesman, said the

The EPA set October 1, 1985, as the deadline for discontinuing use of PCBs in large capacitors that could leak and contaminate the food chain. All electrical equipment that contains 50 parts per million or more PCBs that is ready for disposal must be sent to an EPA-approved facility.

The EPA has said the safest way to destroy PCBs is by incineration. Enesco, Inc., with headquarters at Little Rock, has a large facility at El Dorado that is approved by the EPA for PCB incineration.

The EPA estimates that at the end of 1979, about 47,500 large PCB capacitors and 9,580 PCB transformers were in use at food and feed facilities nationwide.

The EPA says that before PCBs were banned from manufacture and use, vast quantities of the chemical entered the environment. An estimated 91 per cent of the American population now have traces of PCBs in their fatty tissue. About 750 million pounds of the chemical still are in use or in storage around the country.

Recent studies have shown that although a large number of the population had been exposed to PCBs before they were banned, the concentrations are decreasing as time passes.

In 1981, Edwin Clark, an assistant EPA administrator, said at a news conference, "The presence of PCBs in the environment is potentially one of the most serious public health issues we face."

investigative team arrived at the scene before noon Wednesday.

Bill Hawks, vice president of National Electric's Coffeyville facility, said in a telephone interview that the team included four cleanup "specialists" and an "emergency co-ordinator." The company also sent the clean-up workers and a specially equipped truck.

Hawks said his company had notified Enesco, Inc., the hazardous waste disposal firm that is headquartered at Little Rock, Arkansas Power and Light Company and National Electric customers that help might be needed in cleaning up the spill.

Hugh Ernest, Enesco's director of governmental and corporate relations, said late Wednesday afternoon that National Electric would use some of Enesco's laboratory technicians in the cleanup but he didn't know what other role Enesco would play.

"It's just like a forest fire,"

Hawks said. "When it happens, everybody scrambles. When it's over, you stand back and take stock."

Hawks said that immediately after the accident, "our driver, di call in to the emergency number and returned immediately to the scene to do what he could to contain the spill."

Meehan said the transformer were being transported to Coffeyville from Winston-Salem, N.C. Hawks said they were to be drained and cleaned "for EPA-approved disposal."

Hawks described National Electric as "a service company" that has been repairing and cleaning electrical transformers for 25 years. "We work for utility companies, government and industries and one of the services we provide is removal and proper disposal of PCB items for our customers," he said.

Like Enesco, National Electric has an incinerator that destroys PCBs at its Coffeyville facility, Hawks said. The cleanup team that was sent to North Little Rock had performed similar cleanup operations. "This could have been one of our customers calling us to clean up an industrial or commercial spill, he said. Cleaning chemical spills is one of the services the company offers, Hawks said.

National Electric is headquartered at Lakeville, Minn.

A state Transportation Commission spokesman said Wednesday afternoon that National Electric had a permit to operate in Arkansas, "so they were legal as far as coming through."

Merritt said state officials were assisting the National Electric team but "if you can get the responsible party to act swiftly, let them handle it, and they were apparently ready to do that."

The closing of the spill-contaminated section of I-40 caused four-hour traffic tieups. By 9 a Wednesday, westbound traffic was still backed up to the McCain Boulevard overpass, and all westbound traffic was being rerouted east to the Prothro Junction and East Belt Freeway exits on the Memphis highway. At the afternoon rush hour, traffic patterns were further complicated by two minor accidents in the eastbound 40 lanes close to the spill area.

Except for the two accidents eastbound traffic on I-40 and U.S. Highway 67-167 continued without interruption, and workers who are rehabilitating a section of the interstate near where the spill occurred continued with their jobs.

This article was compiled from reports by James Scudder, Cary Burn and Rob Moritz of the Gazette staff.

Partly cloudy  
High 93, low 74  
Details on 2A

# Arkansas Gazette.

SUNDAY  
Final

167th Year—No. 236

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LITTLE ROCK, SUNDAY, JULY 13, 1986

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## In the News

■ **Boy George**, 25, the pop singer who reportedly is undergoing treatment for drug addiction, was arrested at Essex, England, by Scotland Yard narcotics officers and taken to a London jail where he was charged with heroin possession, but was released 12 hours later and ordered to appear before a magistrate July 29.

■ **David Roadhouse**, a Chicago psychotherapist commenting on the disparity between a *Chicago Sun Times* survey in which nearly 80 per cent of married men responding would remarry their current spouses and a *Women's Day* magazine poll in which only half the women participating would remarry their husbands, contended "men experience fulfillment more easily than women do. Women are filled with all these romantic yearnings, and romance is finite, limited, difficult to sustain."

■ **Ellis Rubin**, 61, a Miami lawyer who gained national attention in 1977 when he used prolonged intoxication from television violence as a defense for a teen-aged client charged with murder, was freed from jail by the Florida Supreme Court just nine hours after he began serving a 30-day criminal contempt sentence for refusing to defend a murder suspect he said he knew was going to lie under oath.

■ **Paula Cooper**, 16, who admitted planning and leading three other Gary, Ind., teen-agers in the 1985 robbery and stabbing death

## Contaminated I-40 lane resurfaced after cleanup; segment is reopened

By James Scudder  
GAZETTE STAFF

The section of the westbound lanes of Interstate 40 at North Little Rock that was closed after a chemical spill Wednesday morning was resurfaced Saturday afternoon, and the segment of highway was reopened to traffic at 9:08 p.m. Saturday.

The State Police reported at 10:30 p.m. that traffic was moving smoothly on the stretch and there were no problems. The section that had been closed was between the East Belt Freeway and the Lake-wood Exit.

Dr. Phyllis Garnett, director of the state Pollution Control and Ecology Department, said earlier Saturday that officials had decided after extensive testing Thursday and Friday that any residue of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, that remained on the pavement after extensive cleanup efforts Wednesday through Friday would be sealed under the new layer of asphalt and held there.

### 250 gallons spilled

About 250 gallons of PCB-tainted oil were spilled onto the interstate just west of U.S. Highway 67-167 when a flatbed truck owned by National Electric, Inc., of Lakeville, Minn., and Coffeyville, Kan., struck another vehicle

about 7:16 a.m. Wednesday. The truck was carrying three large electrical transformers, two of which ruptured and spilled the oil onto the highway.

Before the interstate could be closed, about 300 motorists drove through the oil spill, splashing the oil onto the shoulder and into the ditch beside the interstate. State

The section of highway was reopened to traffic at 9:08 p.m. Saturday.

officials Saturday were still appealing for motorists who drove through the oil to call the Truck O-Mat truck wash at the Galloway exit on I-40 to make an appointment to have their cars decontaminated, free of charge. The telephone number to call to make an appointment is 945-2899.

### Effects to health noted

PCBs have been shown to cause cancer and other serious long-term health effects in laboratory animals and less serious acute health effects in humans. The long-term effect on humans isn't precisely known but the chemical compound is regarded by experts as one of the most toxic and dangerous because it can build up in the food

chain and, once present in the body, remains stored in fatty tissue.

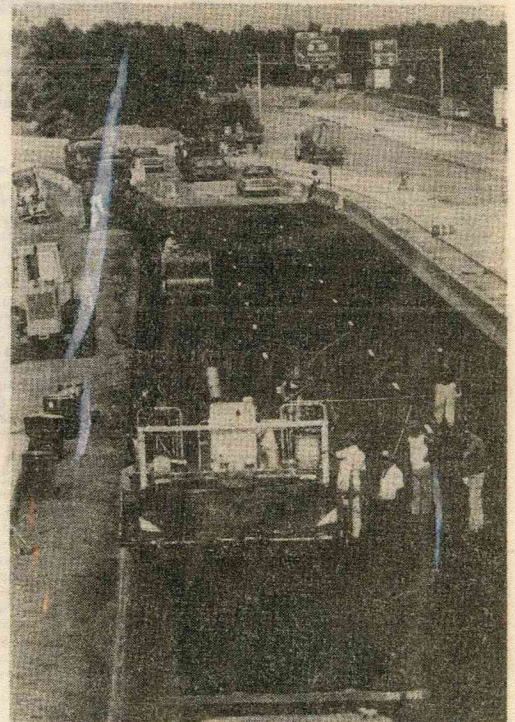
Dr. Robert Blanz, deputy director of the Pollution Control and Ecology Department, was at the spill site Saturday afternoon and said he had begun trying to locate an asphalt contractor about 6:30 a.m. Saturday and finally succeeded shortly before noon. The work was done by the Ben M. Hogan Co. of Little Rock, which pulled a subcontractor off another job to perform the interstate work.

Dr. Blanz said the state Highway and Transportation Department had told him the asphalt would cost \$10,000 to \$12,000, but he didn't know whether that included the cost of laying the asphalt.

### Part of surface removed

Friday, workers from National Electric and state agencies used a concrete grinding machine to remove about one-fourth inch of the surface of the highway along part of a 900-foot stretch where the oil, which contained about 70 per cent PCBs, was either spilled or carried by the tires of passing vehicles. Dr. Garnett said Saturday that extensive tests were made on the concrete particles and it was determined that the tainted oil was sufficiently "stable," that any res-

(See I-40 on Page 11A.)



Workers lay asphalt over contaminated highway.

—Staff Photo by Dan Spatz

# I-40

Continued from Page 1A.

idue remaining after the cleanup operation would remain under an asphalt covering and wouldn't penetrate the concrete base or migrate laterally to the shoulder or ditch beside the roadway.

Contaminated dirt from the ditch and shoulder was removed Wednesday and Thursday by National Electric workers and placed in drums for shipment to Coffeyville. When the accident occurred the truck was en route from North Carolina to Coffeyville, where the transformers were to be flushed and cleaned and then sent to a Nevada landfill.

### Cleanup delayed for equipment

Dr. Garnett said officials were delayed in the cleanup work Friday because they had to locate a grinding machine that also used a water vacuum "so we wouldn't be spreading the water and the millings on the shoulder area." She added, "The system that was brought in did have a vacuum on it, but it wasn't as controlled as we wanted it."

Pollution Control officials had thought Friday that all the PCBs could be removed by grinding off one-fourth inch of the concrete surface, but Dr. Garnett said Saturday she and others decided after extensive analyses of the oil resin containing the PCBs, it would be safer to seal any residue under a coating of asphalt than to continue using the grinding machine and water vacuum.

"We felt that we had a greater risk in continuing the grinding due to the water and the chance that it would run off onto the shoulder and the roadside," Dr. Garnett said. "Therefore, we made the decision last [Friday] night not to continue grinding. Instead, we decided to asphalt that portion where we had the concentration."

Dr. Garnett said one of the reasons for the grinding was to obtain samples of the contaminated concrete to determine "the physical characteristics of the PCBs we were dealing with." She said extensive tests of the concrete samples at the Pollution Control and Ecology Department laboratory showed the PCB-contaminated resin was "a highly stable material, with minimum mobility, and that was one of the questions we answered yesterday: Would it penetrate through the concrete and into the soil? Would it move through the soil itself? It's very



—Staff Photo by Jeff Bowen

**CAR CLEANUP:** An employe of National Electric, Inc., of Lakeville, Minn., and Coffeyville, Kan., applies a cleaning solvent to one of about 300 cars that drove through the area on Interstate 40 at North Little Rock where about 250 gallons of electric transformer oil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls spilled on the highway after an accident at 7:16 a.m. Wednesday. Any solvent spilled onto the plastic layer beneath the car was vacuumed up and put into the tank in the foreground. National Electric — whose flatbed truck was carrying three large transformers, two of which ruptured after the truck struck another vehicle — has been cleaning cars at the Truck O-Mat truck wash at the Galloway exit on I-40 since Friday and will continue through 10 p.m. today. Motorists who drove through the spill should call 945-2899 for an appointment to have their car decontaminated free of charge.

stable, highly immobile, which is excellent. It is binding extremely well to the concrete itself."

Dr. Garnett, who had been persistent in refusing to say exactly when the Interstate could be reopened, said Saturday, "I've been very hesitant to say that because I didn't want to change that every day."

Soon after the PCB spill, pollution control officials had advised motorists who had driven through the oil to take their cars to an automatic car wash. But that advice later was retracted when the officials learned the PCB-tainted resin was too stubborn to be removed by an ordinary car wash and the PCB concentrations in the oil that spilled from the transformers was as high as 700,000 parts per million — much higher than preliminary tests had indicated.

Gary Cozad, manager of Truck O-Mat, where National Electric has rented a truck wash bay to steam-clean contaminated vehicles, said National Electric had cleaned about three vehicles each hour since the operation began Friday

and would continue to clean them through 10 p.m. today.

Friday, pollution control officials placed receptacles at three fire stations at Little Rock and three at North Little Rock and gave motorists who drove through the PCB spill instructions on how to clean their driveways.

The special barrels will be located through 3 p.m. Monday at these fire stations:

**LITTLE ROCK:** Central Fire Station at Seventh and Chester Streets; Station 9 at 1324 North Shackelford Road, and Station 18 at Otter Creek Road and Interstate 30.

**NORTH LITTLE ROCK:** Fire Station 1 at 723 Maple Street; Fire Station 6 at 3500 Camp Robinson Road, and Fire Station 7 at 2400 McCain Boulevard.

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