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Engineer called hero, credited with saving Arizona homes

By KEITH ROGERS

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Dec. 24, 2010 | 12:00 a.m.

Updated: Dec. 24, 2010 | 10:58 a.m.

While the Virgin River continued to rage through Mesquite on Thursday, residents of Arizona communities 10 miles upstream were thankful for a quick-thinking engineer who authorities credit with saving 20 homes from being swept into the swollen Beaver Dam Wash.

Monte Wilson, engineering manager for Mohave County, Ariz., enlisted a team of contractors to install concrete barriers to divert the wash's swift water away from Littlefield, Ariz., and nearby Beaver Dam Resort, where six homes were carried off in floodwaters this week. The barriers had been in storage since a flood in January 2005 wreaked havoc in Mesquite and the surrounding area.

"One very emotional lady hugged us this morning and thanked us for saving her home," Wilson said Thursday in a Mohave County news release. He was directing operations at the scene late Thursday and was unavailable for further comment.

From a helicopter 200 feet above the wash, the view below and upstream of where it empties into the Virgin River showed how close some houses and mobile homes were to joining others that had broken into pieces or were on the brink of toppling into the muddy, fast-moving water.

One house sat mired on a sandbar that had emerged after high water subsided from its peak Wednesday night.

At 9 p.m. Wednesday, the wash crested at 4.7 feet above normal with a flow clocked at more than 9,000 cubic feet per second under Beaver Dam Bridge.

According to Mohave County Development Services Director Nick Hont, more than \$10 million has been spent since 2005 on flood-control work to protect Beaver Dam and Littlefield with most of the funding coming from federal grants.

A key project entailed building a new bridge to withstand a 500-year flood.

Erosion protection structures also were built "which is why no homes were destroyed in Beaver Dam Estates. They got water damage but the structures protected them from being destroyed," Hont said.

Downstream in Mesquite, a subdivision at the edge of the city was spared by an army of volunteers who manned

earth-moving equipment to build a berm that kept the river from engulfing a neighborhood.

"This time we were able to get out there quickly and rally the troops," Mesquite Mayor Susan Holecheck said. "If that equipment hadn't created another obstacle, more water would have come in. We actually were quite lucky."

Although a total amount of damage won't be available until next week, Holecheck said, initial reports are that two homes sustained significant water intrusion compare to 50 during the 2005 flood.

"What we're trying to do is get through the recovery," she said.

Although most homes were spared, she said, there was "considerable damage" to five baseball diamonds at Hunters Park.

Southwest of Mesquite and downstream of where a bridge on Route 170 leads to Bunkerville, the Virgin River had cut so deep into its north bank that a 100-yard segment of a road along the river was wiped out.

Red Cross volunteers who assessed damage in Mesquite, Beaver Dam and Littlefield reported that 174 homes were affected by flooding with most in Beaver Dam and Littlefield. Combined, 143 homes in those communities got less than a foot of water inside them.

In the Beaver Dam area, drinking water was cut off to damaged homes, and flooding destroyed a sewer system lift station, prompting an advisory from health officials for the public to avoid contact with floodwaters.

To accommodate residents, Mohave County agencies delivered bottled water to the area and distributed 55 portable restrooms. Dumpsters were also hauled in for disposing water-soaked carpets and other items.

Red Cross volunteers will be available for affected families to discuss needs and financial assistance from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today at Virgin Valley High School in Mesquite.

Contact reporter Keith Rogers at krogers@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0308.

Find this article at:

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/engineer-s-quick-thinking-credited-with-saving-homes-in-arizona-112421629.html>

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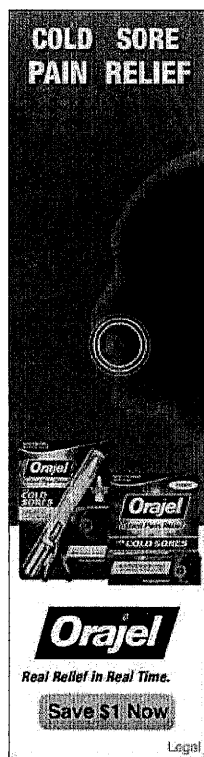
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EXHIBIT 3

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Report reveals traces of chemical in area water supply

By HENRY BREAN

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Dec. 24, 2010 | 12:00 a.m.

Valley drinking water may contain traces of a chemical made famous by an Oscar-winning movie, but don't expect the sequel to "Erin Brockovich" to start filming here soon.

Water officials are dismissing as alarmist the findings of a national environmental organization that found hexavalent chromium in the drinking supplies of 31 cities across the country, including Las Vegas.

In a report released Monday, the Washington, D.C.-based Environmental Working Group said it found 0.06 parts per billion of the chemical, also known as chromium-6, in tap water delivered by the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

But the valley's wholesale water supplier can't confirm the finding, because its laboratory equipment can't detect chromium-6 in concentrations below 1 part per billion.

"It's hard to get your mind around numbers that small," said water authority spokesman J.C. Davis. "If one part per billion is a drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool, this would be one drop in almost 17 Olympic-sized swimming pools."

Even if the chemical is in the water as the Environmental Working Group says, "the public here has no cause for concern either from this report or from these trace levels," Davis said.

"This is more of a political posturing move than it is an actual scientific study," he said of the report.

As fans of Julia Roberts know, the potential hazards of hexavalent chromium contamination first came to light in 1993, when Erin Brockovich helped build a now-famous class action lawsuit against Pacific Gas and Electric Co. for polluting the water supply of Hinkley, Calif.

The suit eventually led to a \$333 million settlement and a big-screen treatment that landed Roberts a best-actress Oscar.

Davis said the Environmental Protection Agency has set limits on "chromium as a family," but it has not established a separate drinking water standard for hexavalent chromium.

The federal agency is conducting human health studies to determine if chromium-6 warrants specific regulation

and at what level.

Rebecca Sutton, senior scientist for the Environmental Working Group, said its time for EPA officials to act.

"Every single day, pregnant mothers in Norman, Oklahoma, school children in Madison, Wisconsin, and many other Americans are drinking water laced with this cancer-causing chemical," Sutton said in written statement. "If the EPA required local water utilities to test for hexavalent chromium, the public would at least know if it was present in their local water."

Brockovich has joined the working group's call for action.

"It is sometimes difficult to understand why I still have to warn the public about the presence of hexavalent chromium in drinking water 23 years after my colleagues and I first sounded the alarm," she said .

"This report underscores, in fairly stark terms, the health risks that millions of Americans still face because of water contamination."

According to the working group, California is the only state that requires specific testing for chromium-6.

Last year, California proposed a public health goal of 0.06 parts per billion for chromium-6 and may become the first state to establish a limit for the chemical.

Davis said a public health goal is just that -- a goal, usually set as close to zero as possible. "It is not the same as a limit. It's not even close," he said.

This is not the first time the Environmental Working Group has criticized water quality in Las Vegas. A year ago, the group released a report that ranked Las Vegas' drinking water 98th out of 100 cities studied because it contains a "chemical cocktail" of regulated and unregulated substances.

Davis said EWG seems more interested in scaring people than really helping them. The group's references to what happened in Hinkley are proof of that.

Davis said the levels of hexavalent chromium at the source of the plume in Hinkley were on the order of 9 parts per million, roughly 150,000 times more concentrated than the 0.06 parts per billion the working group said it found here.

In the meantime, the valley's drinking water continues to meet federal standards for all regulated substances including total chromium, which the EPA limits at 100 parts per billion.

According to the authority's latest water quality report, the only chromium found in the valley's water last year came from groundwater wells used to meet peak demand in the summer. The maximum level detected was 6 parts per billion.

EPA reports that no U.S. utilities are currently in violation of the total chromium limit, which the agency says includes chromium-6.

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbrean@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.

Find this article at:

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/report-reveals-traces-of-chemical-in-area-water-supply-112421614.html>

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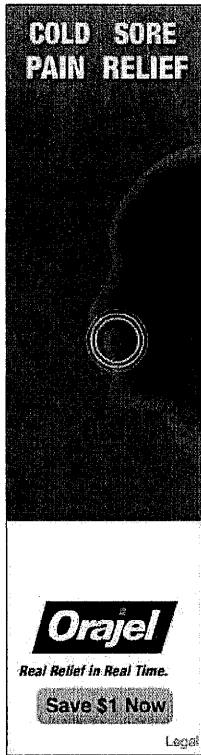
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EXHIBIT 5

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Chamber president Matt Crosson dies

By PAUL HARASIM

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Dec. 24, 2010 | 1:32 p.m.

Though Matt Crosson died Thursday at 61 -- just nine months after taking over as president and CEO of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce -- associates say he still managed to make a difference in the area's business community.

His vision and leadership led to the chamber's recent distribution of 250,000 Chamber Membership Rewards Cards to encourage the support of local businesses, according to Kristin McMillan, chairman of the Chamber's Board of Trustees.

She also noted that he spearheaded the successful "Viva Las Business" campaign.

"He was committed to finding ways for the chamber to help businesses and the community recover from the devastating economy," McMillan said.

Phil Carlino, owner of Fremont Coin Corp., said Crosson's vigorous advocacy on behalf of the business community will be missed.

"He was exemplary in the job he did for the chamber," Carlino said.

According to Cara Roberts, a spokeswoman for the chamber, Crosson reported feeling unwell in September and doctors determined he needed open-heart surgery.

Following the surgery, Crosson suffered a stroke.

Though the cause of death is unknown at this time, Roberts said doctors believe Crosson died in MountainView Hospital of complications from the stroke.

Crosson came to the chamber from New York's Long Island Association, a business group with more than 5,000 members. He had been president and chief executive officer of the association since 1993.

As head of the New York business association, he brought luminaries, including former Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, to lunches and meetings.

In New York, Crosson's wife, Elaine, was vice president for legal affairs and general counsel for Long Island University. In addition to his wife, Crosson is survived by their 12-year-old son, Daniel.

In his blog as head of the Las Vegas chamber, Crosson came across as enthusiastic about business in the Las

Vegas Valley.

In May, he wrote:

"One of the things that strikes me about the uniqueness of Las Vegas is its inherent creativity. Las Vegas has always been a place where people think outside of the box. Certainly, it took imagination to see that Las Vegas could become the adult playground in the middle of the desert. And it continues to require inventive thinking to keep this city fresh, continuously embracing change and innovation."

Crosson joined the chamber as it prepared for the 2011 legislative session that could mean new taxes on business. The group has been a key opponent to new levies and its leaders have long argued for reform in public-sector pay and benefits, which often outpace overall compensation in the private sector.

Funeral services are not set at this time, but Roberts said it is likely that memorial services will be held in both Las Vegas and Long Island.

Contact Paul Harasim at pharasim@reviewjournal.com or 702-387-2908.

Find this article at:

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/chamber-of-commerce-president-matt-crosson-dies-112437944.html>

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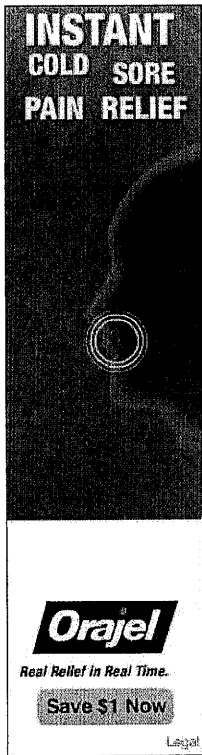
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EXHIBIT 7

Shelter's smiles are few

By LYNNETTE CURTIS

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Posted: Dec. 25, 2010 | 12:00 a.m.

The 11-year-old boy doesn't once crack a smile during a nearly two-hour early Christmas celebration at The Shade Tree shelter.

Not while carefully choosing presents for his mother from tables full of donated perfumes, handbags, jewelry and gloves. He settles, with a decisive nod, on a robe and some sandals.

Not while quietly informing Santa that what he really wants this year is a portable DVD player and a CD player, impossible gifts for his mother, who sits by, shaking her head.

And not while chasing his brothers and sisters around the shelter's ground floor, helping his mother keep an eye on the brood.

As the eldest of six siblings, the boy best understands the grim direction his family's life has taken. They are living in a homeless shelter for Christmas.

"It's not very good," he says with a scowl.

Then he makes an effort to be more positive.

"It's kinda OK," he says. "My mom's going to get a job soon. We'll only be here one more month."

Meanwhile, he and his siblings are among the 100 or so children, ranging in age from 2 weeks to 16 years old, who are spending the holidays in the shelter for women and children.

They and their mothers have landed here for one of two reasons: economics or abuse.

Each holiday, the shelter sees the number of women and children seeking shelter rise, especially the number of those who are fleeing abusive situations, says Marlene Richter, the shelter's executive director.

"All of them have a harder time on the holidays," she explains. "There's more stress. There's more alcohol and partying, more expectations. The children are out of school."

This holiday, about a third of the shelter's 210 women are running from abusive relationships.

Shelter staffers, with the help of a lot of volunteers, do their best to create an abundance of holiday cheer. The partying begins a week or so before Christmas, with presents and treats and an early visit from Santa.

On Christmas Eve, there is cookie decorating, karaoke, movies and hot chocolate. Early Christmas morning, Santa magically appears simultaneously on each of the shelter's three floors.

The residents get to enjoy an all-day holiday feast. It's organized chaos. But shelter staffers also make sure they "leave some quiet space somewhere in the building, in case the women can't handle it," Richter says.

For some women, the scars are too raw to feel like celebrating. For others who may be separated from their children or otherwise alone, watching young ones opening gifts may be too painful.

The children themselves express predictable yet heartbreaking holiday concerns based on their individual circumstances.

If they are in shelter because of abuse in the home, "they really miss being in the house they had and the traditions they had," Richter says.

If they are in shelter for economic reasons, "they are surprised Santa remembered them at all," she says.

The 11-year-old's mother sits cradling her 1-year-old daughter, her youngest, in the shelter's downstairs community room. Her eldest boy sits silently next to her, listening to her talk about how she and the children ended up here. He slowly pushes around the table his newest toys, a set of miniature skateboards. The other children play together nearby.

His mother, who is 39, says she didn't know where else to go, two months ago, when the family was kicked out of its apartment. She used to make enough cleaning houses to pay the rent. But she couldn't work as much once the baby was born. Her hours kept getting cut anyway as her clients began to struggle during the recession.

She also lost her ID, making finding a new job all the more difficult. And what would she do with the children?

"It was this or the street," she says while trying to soothe the baby, who has begun to whimper.

Her story is the kind that makes some people angry. Her children were fathered by three different men. She kept having children even though she couldn't afford them. She kept trusting men who should not have been trusted.

"I obviously made some mistakes," she says with a wry smile.

She hasn't heard from the 11-year-old's father in years.

"He left me when I was a baby," the boy says matter-of-factly.

The father of four of the children hit their mother. She doesn't know where he is. Last time she spoke to him, he said he had nothing to offer her.

She refers to the third man, the father of her baby girl, as her boyfriend. He drives a truck for a living. But he doesn't sound very reliable, either.

"He gives me \$100 here and there," she says. "He calls me. He's trying to find a place for us but it's hard with so many kids."

She has no extended family to turn to. She says nothing about having someplace else to go in a month.

It's been a struggle living in the shelter with six children.

"At first they cried all the time," she says. "They complained, 'I don't know why you brought us here. Why don't you have a job?' But what am I going to do?"

The 11-year-old, who hasn't lifted his eyes from his new toys, softly interrupts.

"Maybe I'll take more of these little skateboards instead of a DVD player," he says.

"I don't mind being here," his mother continues with a half-smile. "God brought us here, and he won't abandon us. Thank God we had a place to go. Every day, I find something to smile about."

Then she covers herself with a blanket so the baby can nurse.

Contact reporter Lynnette Curtis at lcurtis@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0285.

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Shelter's smiles are few

Not while quietly informing Santa that what he really wants this year is a portable DVD player and a CD player, impossible gifts for his mother, who sits by, shaking her head.

And not while chasing his brothers and sisters around the shelter's ground floor, helping his mother keep an eye on the brood.

As the eldest of six siblings, the boy best understands the grim direction his family's life has taken. They are living in a homeless shelter for Christmas.

"It's not very good," he says with a scowl.

Then he makes an effort to be more positive.

"It's kinda OK," he says. "My mom's going to get a job soon. We'll only be here one more month."

Meanwhile, he and his siblings are among the 100 or so children, ranging in age from 2 weeks to 16 years old, who are spending the holidays in the shelter for women and children.

They and their mothers have landed here for one of two reasons: economics or abuse.

Each holiday, the shelter sees the number of women and children seeking shelter rise, especially the number of those who are fleeing abusive situations, says Marlene Richter, the shelter's executive director.

"All of them have a harder time on the holidays," she explains. "There's more stress. There's more alcohol and partying, more expectations. The children are out of school."

This holiday, about a third of the shelter's 210 women are running from abusive relationships.

Shelter staffers, with the help of a lot of volunteers, do their best to create an abundance of holiday cheer. The partying begins a week or so before Christmas, with presents and treats and an early visit from Santa.

On Christmas Eve, there is cookie decorating, karaoke, movies and hot chocolate. Early Christmas morning, Santa magically appears simultaneously on each of the shelter's three floors.

The residents get to enjoy an all-day holiday feast. It's organized chaos. But shelter staffers also make sure they "leave some quiet space somewhere in the building, in case the women can't handle it," Richter says.

For some women, the scars are too raw to feel like celebrating. For others who may be separated from their children or otherwise alone, watching young ones opening gifts may be too painful.

The children themselves express predictable yet heartbreaking holiday concerns based on their individual circumstances.

If they are in shelter because of abuse in the home, "they really miss being in the house they had and the traditions they had," Richter says.

If they are in shelter for economic reasons, "they are surprised Santa remembered them at all," she says.

The 11-year-old's mother sits cradling her 1-year-old daughter, her youngest, in the shelter's downstairs community room. Her eldest boy sits silently next to her, listening to her talk about how she and the children ended up here. He slowly pushes around the table his newest toys, a set of miniature skateboards. The other children play together nearby.

His mother, who is 39, says she didn't know where else to go, two months ago, when the family was kicked out of its apartment. She used to make enough cleaning houses to pay the rent. But she couldn't work as much once the baby was born. Her hours kept getting cut anyway as her clients began to struggle during the recession.

She also lost her ID, making finding a new job all the more difficult. And what would she do with the children?

"It was this or the street," she says while trying to soothe the baby, who has begun to whimper.

Her story is the kind that makes some people angry. Her children were fathered by three different men. She kept having children even though she couldn't afford them. She kept trusting men who should not have been trusted.

"I obviously made some mistakes," she says with a wry smile.

She hasn't heard from the 11-year-old's father in years.

"He left me when I was a baby," the boy says matter-of-factly.

The father of four of the children hit their mother. She doesn't know where he is. Last time she spoke to him, he said he had nothing to offer her.

She refers to the third man, the father of her baby girl, as her boyfriend. He drives a truck for a living. But he doesn't sound very reliable, either.

"He gives me \$100 here and there," she says. "He calls me. He's trying to find a place for us but it's hard with so many kids."

She has no extended family to turn to. She says nothing about having someplace else to go in a month.

It's been a struggle living in the shelter with six children.

"At first they cried all the time," she says. "They complained, 'I don't know why you brought us here. Why don't you have a job?' But what am I going to do?"

The 11-year-old, who hasn't lifted his eyes from his new toys, softly interrupts.

"Maybe I'll take more of these little skateboards instead of a DVD player," he says.

"I don't mind being here," his mother continues with a half-smile. "God brought us here, and he won't abandon us. Thank God we had a place to go. Every day, I find something to smile about."

Then she covers herself with a blanket so the baby can nurse.

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