

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY

AWARDS/EVENTS

TORNADO AUTHOR GOES ONLINE

■(NORMAN, OK) Author Richard Bedard will be the guest for an interactive talk about tornadoes and storm chasers on America Online on May 17 at 7 p.m.

Bedard, the author of *In the Shadow of the Tornado*, plans to discuss the real motivations and stories of storm-chasing meteorologists, whose fictional exploits are depicted in the recently released movie "Twister."

He is also prepared to answer any of a number of questions about tornadoes from those in the "audience." AOL subscribers who want to attend should go to AOL Live. Bedard's talk will be held in the News Room.

In the Shadow of the Tornado (Gilco Publishing, April 1996) visits Oklahoma for a look at nature's most terrible storm. The book features a gripping recreation of the Woodward tornado of 1947, the deadliest in state history, and traces the history of the severe weather warning system and the sudden rise in popularity of the hobby of storm chasing.

For more information, call (405) 447-3005.

—GILCO PUBLISHING
05/13/96

MISS AMERICA TO CARRY OLYMPIC TORCH

■(YALE, OK) Miss America 1996, Shawntel Smith, will carry the Olympic Torch in her home state May 18 as a segment of her national speaking tour across the nation.

"I am delighted to serve as a catalyst to emphasize the significance of this gathering in Atlanta, GA of the world's greatest athletes," she said.

She will serve as Grand Marshal of a 2:00 p.m. Western Day Parade through downtown Yale and later carry the torch past the Jim Thorpe Home, the only property ever owned by the 1912 Olympian.

Formal ceremonies will begin at 5:45 p.m. in Jim Thorpe Park.

The Olympic Torch, accompanied by an

"Many priceless things can be bought."
Maria Von Ebner-Eschenbach

18-vehicle caravan, will arrive in Jim Thorpe Park at 6:30 p.m.

Following a formal presentation of the torch, Miss America will carry the torch through Yale until the entourage leaves for an observance scheduled at Stillwater.

—YALE NEWS
05/13/96

CRAWFORD PRESENTS AWARDS TO HIGH SCHOOL AND STUDENT

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The three high school students who won the first annual art contest sponsored by the Oklahoma Insurance Department will be recognized at awards assemblies this week. Insurance Commissioner John Crawford announced that the Oklahoma Association of Insurance Agents will provide cash prizes for the school art departments attended by the winning students. "We really appreciate the insurance agents support in our project and I am sure the teachers will find use for the \$300, \$200 and \$100 checks," commented Crawford.

First place winner Nadiye Coskuner who attends Enid High School will see her art on the cover of the 89th Annual Report and Directory. Second place winner, Justin Wayne Hill, is a student at Lexington High School and third place winner Clint Levi Clark is a student at Chandler High School. "The art of these students is so impressive that we are featuring a color reproduction of their work along with each student's photograph and short biography on our back cover," Crawford explained.

Insurance Commissioner Crawford will be attending all three school's awards assemblies to present the awards.

—INSURANCE COMMISSIONER
05/14/96

BUDGET

PANEL PRESSES DAC FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

■(GIT) What was supposed to be a discussion of the fiscal needs of the state's district attorneys turned into a debate over the accountability of funding maintained by the District Attorneys Council.

Appearing before the General Conference Committee on Appropriations' subcommittee on judicial, public safety and law enforcement services, DAC director Bruce

Walker found himself having to defend the agency's handling of a variety of funds, including those appropriated by the state, in a sometimes heated exchange with some members of the panel.

Sen. Herb Rozell, D-Tahlequah, asked Walker how much money, including state and federal appropriations, the council had been responsible for handling during the most recent fiscal year.

As Walker began to detail the various appropriations made to the agency, Rozell interrupted, asking if the total amount was not close to \$56 million. Walker disagreed, saying a total of \$47.4 million had come into the council, including \$1.67 million in federal funds that went directly to district attorneys.

Rozell then pressed Walker for the total amount spent by the council on operations. Walker said the amount was \$755,104.90.

Perhaps the harshest questioning during the meeting came from Sen. Gene Stipe, D-McAlester, who asked, "Who decides which members of this committee you will denounce after we meet?"

When Walker said he did not understand the senator's question, Stipe said, "It happens every session. The council and individual district attorneys hold press conferences to denounce this committee because we do what you wanted us to do."

Walker agreed, saying it was not the council's practice to denounce the committee.

Stipe also pressed Walker for an accounting of money resulting from drug forfeitures and bogus check collections, saying he had repeatedly asked for such reports but that they had never been supplied. Walker immediately distributed a report concerning the funds from the 1995 fiscal year and added that he had made the reports available as required by statute.

As it has with other agencies, the subcommittee delayed consideration of the bulk of the council's request, approving only the state employee pay raise and associated benefits increase portions of the request.

The council asked the panel to consider allocating \$66,994 for an increase in district attorneys salaries mandated by law and effective Jan. 1, 1997; \$5.6 million to cover the cost of 140 FTEs in district attorneys offices to deal with increased workloads re-

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