

Around the Nation

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Court to Rule on 'Son of Sam' Book

NEW YORK—A state judge in Brooklyn will be asked tomorrow to approve a lucrative book-movie deal on the life of Son of Sam killer David Berkowitz that includes a \$250,000 advance.

State Supreme Court Justice Carmine Ventiera must decide whether to sanction the possible multimillion-dollar package under a law designed to turn proceeds from such ventures over to crime victims. If he approves the proposal, probably none of the advance money from McGraw-Hill would go to survivors or relatives of the six persons slain during Berkowitz's 12-month reign of terror.

Author Lawrence David Klausner would receive \$150,000. A literary agent would receive 10 percent, and the court-appointed conservator for Berkowitz, Doris Johnson, would receive the remaining \$75,000, presumably to pay the killer's lawyers' fees.

Under the state Crime Victims Compensation Law, attorney fees have first lien on estates of convicts like Berkowitz. If the book succeeds, and is followed by a movie, the excess profits in the conservator's portion of the royalties may then be available to settle the millions of dollars of claims filed by survivors and relatives of victims.

Cultists' Relatives Sue

LOS ANGELES — Relatives of four Peoples Temple members who died in the Jonestown, Guyana, jungle have filed a \$10 million wrongful death suit

against the cult, the estate of founder Jim Jones and attorney Mark Lane.

Also included as defendants in the suit were unidentified drug companies who sold or provided poisonous drugs to the Peoples Temple.

Two other civil suits had been filed earlier this month by relatives of victims who died in the November 1978 murder-suicide, also seeking \$10 million each.

The latest suit was filed by Lawrence George Bright and Wilford Foster over the deaths of Ruby Jean Bright, Lawrence George Bright III, Juanita Jean Bright and Stephanie Chacon.

States Review Speed Limit

DENVER — Colorado has become the second western state to begin debate on a measure to increase the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit to 65 mph, even though it would mean the loss of federal highway money.

The bill before the Colorado House is similar to one approved last week by Wyoming's Senate. Officials in other Western states, including Oklahoma, Montana, New Mexico, Washington and Utah, have indicated interest in overturning the 55 mph limit imposed nationwide in 1973 as a fuel conservation measure.

Colorado state Rep. Bob Stephenson, in introducing the 65-mph measure, charged the federal government with "blackmail" by threatening to cut off highway funds.

"First, we pay federal tax on the gasoline, then they give it back to us

in the form of highway aid - but only if we agree to go by their speed limit," Stephenson said.

Stephenson said he is uncertain how much his state could lose. Colorado received \$140 million in federal highway aid this fiscal year.

Ray Seeks New Trial

MEMPHIS — Attorneys for James Earl Ray have filed another petition seeking a new trial for the convicted assassin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

The petition sent by attorneys Mark Lane of Memphis and Charles Galbreath of Nashville would have been filed a week earlier, said Leland McNabb, an assistant attorney general, but was returned to the attorneys because it did not have enough postage.

Ray originally pleaded guilty to the King slaying, but has been trying to change his plea ever since. The latest petition claims he is entitled to a new trial because the trial judge in the case, W. Preston Battle, died before hearing a motion for a new trial.

The petition also said the conviction was flawed because the verdict that sent Ray to prison for 99 years did not specify whether it was for first or second-degree murder.

Ray previously was granted a hearing on his claim for a new trial in 1974. He then told U.S. District Judge Robert McRae Jr. his lawyers had pressured him into pleading guilty so they could make money on a book. McRae denied his request.

Hearings on Cults Draws Unified Protest

By Marjorie Hyer

Special to The Washington Post

The Unification Church and some religious groups that have denounced it in the past have teamed up to attack an informal congressional hearing on religious cults.

The Unification Church yesterday brought its top national and state leadership to Capitol Hill to lobby members to pressure Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) to call off Monday's hearing, which is heavily loaded with professional deprogrammers and other avowed enemies of the church founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

At the same time, a letter to Dole signed by representatives of nine Protestant and Jewish groups, including the National Council of Churches and the Synagogue Council, charged that the lack of "strong advocates for religious liberty" at the scheduled hearing poses a threat to First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom.

Barry Lynn, legislative counsel for the United Church of Christ, who drafted the letter, charged

that Monday's meeting, which Dole's office is calling an "information session" rather than a formal hearing, is "really a witch hunt."

The letter said the hearing "can do nothing but inflame the public and obscure the delicate and complex issues which surround the activities of minority groups." It complained that "no strong advocates for religious liberty are represented, yet vital First Amendment concerns are at the very heart of the debate about so-called cults."

With the exception of Jacqueline Speier, an aide to the late Rep. Leo J. Ryan, (D-Calif.) who was wounded in the November ambush in Guyana in which Ryan died, most of the scheduled witnesses have achieved prominence in their battles against the Unification Church. Best-known is Ted Patrick, an ex-aide to former California governor Ronald Reagan who has served several prison terms for his role in kidnapping and deprogramming cult members.

Dole's office charged late yesterday that the intent of Monday's session has been "misconstrued," adding that it is not a congressional hearing, an investigation or "a debate between opposing points of view."

"It is very simply an information session for members of Congress and their staffs on the cult phenomenon in this country."

Bill Katz, an aide to Dole, acknowledged that the session was planned after the mass suicide-murder at the Peoples Temple settlement in Jonestown. "In some respects," he said, "it is a reaction to Guyana."

In the wake of that tragedy, he said "the other members (of Congress) said they didn't know enough about it to sponsor legislation" to restrict religious cults.

The protest, which Lynn emphasized was not prompted by the Unification Church, reflects the sensitivities of mainline religious leaders to any effort to legislate religious activities.

"This time they are not coming after us," said Lynn. "But if we don't speak out now, we have no right to when they come after the Methodists or the Unitarians or whoever."

The signers of the letter also include executives of the United Methodist and United Presbyterian churches, United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., Unitarian Universalist Association and Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.