

4 vow to starve in jail to protest light sentence

Associated Press

NEW BRAUNFELS — Four jail inmates say they will starve themselves to death if the district attorney does not reopen the case of an Army private given probation for a traffic accident that killed four people.

Pickets from The Committee for Justice for All have joined the protest, which began April 15, the day after William Dale Savage was given 10 years probation and a \$5,000 fine. He could have received up to 10 years in prison.

The four Comal County inmates started a hunger strike to protest the sentence.

"We hope it ain't going to take our deaths, but if that's what it takes, we will stand by our word," said inmate Juan Lopez, who says he has not eaten since April 15.

The group is subsisting on coffee, tea, juice and a powdered soft drink, he said.

Savage, 23, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in the Oct. 30 death of Ruben Saucedo Sr.

He also has been charged in the deaths of Saucedo's pregnant wife and two children, but District Attorney William Schroder has said he has not decided whether to try the private on those charges.

Mexican-American groups now have become

involved in the case, claiming racism.

The head of the local Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Suzanne Hildebrand, this week filed papers asking the Army to give Savage a dishonorable discharge.

The Saucedo family was killed as they left the Wursthfest festival, held annually in this town north of San Antonio, and walked across a highway.

Prosecutors said Savage was drunk when his car smashed into the Saucedos.

The protestors say they are angry Savage received a probated sentence, and what they see as Schroeder's reluctance to try the Fort Sam Houston soldier for the three other deaths.

"The jury did make their decision on one of the charges," Lopez said. "The other three killed — he's got to make a decision on that."

"I just felt, 'How about if it was my family?'" he said.

Lopez, awaiting trial on forgery charges, said the four inmates began fasting soon after the sentence was announced.

Two of them — Gilbert Gonzalez of New Braunfels and Richard Willis — began eating briefly but have since stopped again, Lopez said. The fourth inmate, Margarito Maldonado of Gonzales, has not eaten since April 15, he said.

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I have just read an article in the City of Fort Worth Star Telegram, dated April 23, 1983. This article upsets me because it reveals a drunken driving fatality case in the City of New Braunfels, Texas, and it points to an old problem: lack of sensitivity and justice towards Hispanics.

I am referring to the case of a Fort Sam Houston Army Private Williams Dale Savage who was tried on a drunken driving charge that resulted in the death of four Hispanic people on October 30, 1982. The family of Mr. Ruben Saucedo, his pregnant wife and two children.

The private was tried on the death of Mr. Saucedo on April 14, 1983 and the court gave Williams Dale Savage ten years probated sentence and \$5,000.00 fine. Apparently we still have one ethnic group dealing out justice as indicated by the City of New Braunfels. This attitude reflects on the District Attorney William Schroder, as revealed by his reluctance to mete out the justice this case deserves.

The present situation in that city distracts from the justice being demanded by our President, our Governor, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and concerned people who are lobbying for increased legislation to apply the law to drunken drivers.

Let's get something done at New Braunfels, like justice! I personally would like to know, why the District Attorney is so reluctant to try the Fort Sam Houston army private in accordance with the law, when the law was being violated. Is he being pressured by the Army, Fort Sam Houston, or New Braunfels people? I would like to be informed.

Sincerely,

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