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Remembering Those Who Gave Their All

Mojave Cemetery
Monday, MAY 29, 2023
11:00 a.m.
Remembering Those Who Gave Their All
Sponsored by:
East Kern Cemetery District
For more information, call 661.824.2778
Speaker: David Robledo

At the age of ten David's Boy Scout Troup traveled to Edwards Air Force base for an Air Show. It was at this time he knew that one day he would join the Air Force. He graduated from La Puente High in June of 1976, and soon after joined the U.S. Air Force. He served his country for 22 years as an Armament System Technician and obtained the rank of Master Sergeant. David served in the Gulf War and is now a Civil Servant at Edwards Air Force Base where he supervises fifteen active-duty aircraft technicians that evaluate new aircraft system designs.

Edwards opens New Digital Test and Training Range

By Patti Orr

EDWARDS - Edwards Air Force Base, the 412th Electronic Warfare Group and the 445th Test Squadron are celebrating the opening of a brand-new digital testing training facility enabled by the Joint Simulation Environment. A ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening was held on the afternoon of May 8th with several dignitaries in attendance, including US Congressman Mike Garcia from the California 27th District Representative for US Congressman Kevin McCarthy, Jake Lopez, Representative for California 12th District Senator Shannon Grove, Dominic Heiden and Representative for California 21st District Senator Scott Wilson, Brandon Rogue.

According to a press release from Edwards Air Force Base, the DTTTR is specifically designed to meet the unique and complex needs of the Joint Simulation Environment. The facility is equipped with cutting edge technology and enables Edwards skilled test professionals to work more effectively and efficiently than ever.

"I'm grateful to the countless individuals, including leadership from 412th Test Wing in the Air Force Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base, who have worked tirelessly to advance the state-of-the-art facility. This will serve as an invaluable resource to help test weapons systems and realistic environments and better prepare for future missions and because of these unwavering efforts, our nation's Air Force will be stronger and better equipped to handle the challenges", according to a statement from Congressman McCarthy.

Adoptive parents of missing Cal City boys found guilty of murder

Staff report

(This story originally appeared on ridgecrestca.com Friday.)

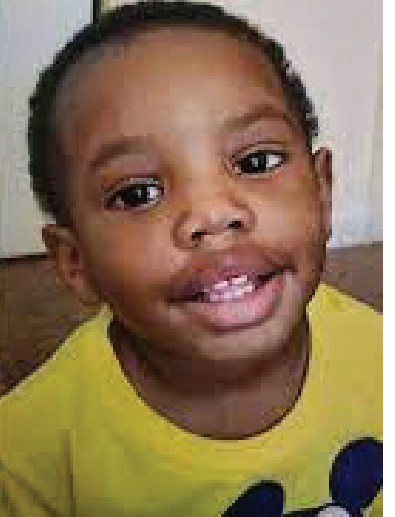
BAKERSFIELD — The adoptive parents of two California City boys who were reported missing in 2020 were found guilty of second-degree murder and other offenses following a jury trial on May 18 at the Metro Branch of the Kern County Superior Court in Bakersfield.

Trezell and Jacqueline West were found guilty of five of the seven charges after dozens of people testified and more than 100 exhibits were presented during the week long trial.

Jurors found the Wests guilty of second-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter and child cruelty regarding Orrin West, 4, but failed to reach verdicts



on second-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in connection with Orson's death. A guilty verdict for child cruelty was returned regarding Orson.



In addition, the adoptive parents were convicted of falsely reporting an emergency. Authorities have not discovered the location of the boys' bodies.

According to court reports, the Wests reported Orrin and Orson missing from their California City home on Dec. 21, 2020. Prosecutors say the boys died three months earlier while the family was still living in Bakersfield with their six children.

Prosecutor Eric Smith claimed the Wests abused their adopted children, and that Orrin died in September 2020.

According to Smith, the Wests tried to cover up the murders of the two boys by disposing of their bodies.

The defense counsel argued that authorities did not investigate other possibilities, and that the boys could have been murdered by a sex offender or by a member of their biological family.

Convictions for second-degree murder carries a prison term of 15 years to life.

Sentencing is set for July 13.

11-Year-old California City Cold Case comes to a Close

By Patti Orr

BAKERSFIELD - A jury of 12 men and women deliberated for 30-minutes then returned with a Guilty verdict in the murder trial of Jose William Lara; the man accused of killing California City resident Desiree Thompson in 2012. Kern County Prosecuting Attorney Christine Antonios laid out the case in her opening statement as Kern County Deputy Public Defense Attorney Mark Stamper listened then gave his opening statement when the trial began on May 9th.

The decade old case was first reported in Jan. 2012 when Thompson disappeared while walking home from a market in California City. A man later identified as

"Not having my daughter is probably the worst experience I've ever had in my life and to now have to face this person in court every day until justice is served is very very hard"
-Sheri Smith

Lara approached her in his vehicle and offered her a ride after she allegedly got into an argument with her husband Edward Gibson who was originally a suspect but was never charged with any crime related to her disappearance. The disappearance of Thompson gained media attention for several years while police investigated.

According to reports, Lara drove Thompson back to his rented residence in the 20300 block of 86th Street where he then killed and buried her in his backyard. Lara denied any knowledge of the crime or her whereabouts.

Ten years later, two men came forward and according to reports, one of the men told police that Lara allegedly told him that he killed a woman and buried her in his backyard; the woman allegedly matched the description of Thompson. When asked by police why he did not come forward sooner; the man claimed he

was afraid he would be deported.

Lara moved from the 86th Street residence to the 8000 block of California City Blvd where FBI agents were watching him. The FBI, fearing that Lara would somehow disappear, contacted a command post and investigators detained him at a local gas station. When officers obtained a search warrant for his apartment, they located a 24-inch machete, a beaded bracelet and 6 cellphones.

On March 25, 2022; police obtained a search warrant and located human remains later identified by the Kern County Coroner's Office as Thompson in the backyard of the 86th Street residence where the informant told them that Lara buried Thompson's body; bones, teeth, hair, clothing and a shoe were found at the location.

Lara denied any wrongdoing when interviewed by police, claiming he "cut his hand while fighting with another person who attacked me with a knife."

"Not having my daughter is probably the worst experience I've ever had in my life and to now have to face this person in court every day until justice is served is very very hard" said Sheri Smith who is Thompson's mother.

Lara appeared for several Pre-Preliminary Hearings, Preliminary Hearings and Further Hearings until a trial date was set for May 9th.

During closing statements, Prosecutor Christine Antonios said, "He wasn't overwhelmed; he was almost bragging about it." Kern County Deputy Public Defender Mark Stamper told the jury that, "They haven't proven to you beyond a reasonable doubt that Lara did the murder."

After the jury came back with a guilty verdict, Smith was reported to have said, "It's like a weight that has been lifted off me." Lara is scheduled to be sentenced at 8:30am on June 16th in the same courtroom where he was found guilty; he will most likely spend the rest of his life in prison and could possibly face the death penalty.



Desiree Thompson and her mother Sheri Smith. PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERI SMITH



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM DIANA AMON
StratoLaunch followed by its chase plane flying over North Edwards on May 13th.

StratoLaunch prepares for Hypersonic Flight this Summer

By Patti Orr

LOMPOC - The Mojave based StratoLaunch LLC announced in a press release that on Saturday, May 14th; they successfully completed a mid-air launch of a test vehicle that could achieve hypersonic flight this summer.

StratoLaunch; the world's largest aircraft ever built, demonstrated that it can cleanly and safely release the company's rocket-powered Talon-A test vehicle when it flew over the skies of Eastern Kern County. Several North Edwards residents saw the plane flying over (many for the first time) and took photos and videos of the massive aircraft.

StratoLaunch has a dual fuselage, a wingspan of approximately 385 feet, 2 cockpits for the pilot and co-pilot and was followed by a chase plane in case of emergency. Vandenberg Space Force Base in Lompoc played host during the 4-hour, 8-minute flight historical flight.

"The test flight today was exceptional, and our hardware and data collection systems performed

as anticipated; we now stand at the precipice of achieving hypersonic flight and with this landmark test complete, the team progresses towards its first hypersonic flight later this summer" President and CEO Zachary Krevor said in the release.

The company plans to use the Roc to launch the reusable Talon-A autonomous planes to carry customized payloads for paying customers; the idea is to have Talon-A fly at more than 5 times the speed of sound which is a capability in which the United States still sits behind Russia and China.

According to the press release, the company said that Saturday's flight was the 11th for Roc and the 2nd time StratoLaunch has flown from Vandenberg; the Talon-A was released from the center wing pylon. The company announced at the beginning of April the successful completion of a third captive-carry flight of a Talon-A that lasted 5-hours marking the beginning of routine flights out of Vandenberg.