

# Georgia man tried to blackmail Oprah

CHICAGO (AP) - A man has been charged with trying to extort \$1.5 million from Oprah Winfrey by threatening to release recorded telephone conversations he claimed would hurt her reputation, according to the FBI and published reports.

Keifer Bonvillain, 36, targeted a person identified only as "a public figure and the owner of a Chicago-based company," according to a criminal complaint filed in U.S. District Court. The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, citing unnamed sources, reported Saturday that Bonvillain's target was Winfrey.

Bonvillain, of Atlanta, was arrested Dec. 15 in the parking lot of an Atlanta hotel and released on \$20,000 bail. He was scheduled for a preliminary hearing in Chicago this week.

According to the complaint, Bonvillain met a California-based employee of the Chicago company at a party more than two years ago,

then recorded conversations with the employee about the owner and her business.

In mid-October he sent the owner an e-mail, telling her an employee said awful things about her, the complaint states.

A month later, Bonvillain sent a letter saying he had tapes of the conversations, an FBI agent alleges in the complaint.

In response, another associate of the company called Bonvillain and learned he had taped 12 hours of those discussions.

Over the next few weeks, Bonvillain told the associate he wanted to publish a book based on the tapes and claimed he had received offers of \$500,000 to \$3 million from tabloids and book publishers, the complaint said. "There are a lot of people who would want these," Bonvillain said, according to the complaint.

The associate, who was working with the FBI, agreed to a \$1.5 million price, wired

Bonvillain \$3,000 in earnest money and arranged to meet him in the parking lot, the complaint said. Bonvillain was arrested the next day.

Bonvillain told the *Sun-Times* the charges were a misunderstanding.

"There is nothing to it," he said. "It's nothing. It was a big mix-up."

A call Saturday to a number for a Bonvillain in Atlanta reached a recorded message saying the line had been disconnected.

Bonvillain's attorney, Kent Carlson, told the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* he could neither confirm nor deny details in the complaint. Phone and e-mail messages left by The Associated Press for Carlson were not immediately returned Saturday.

Winfrey was out of the country Saturday. There was no immediate response to phone messages seeking comment from Harpo Productions Inc., Winfrey's company, or the U.S. attorney's office.

## Ella

(Continued from Page 1) tured among baseball sluggers.

Born in Newport News, Va., in 1917, Ella Jane Fitzgerald moved with her mother to Yonkers, N.Y., as a youngster and began to sing and dance from an early age.

She began winning talent competitions in the early

1930s and was hired to sing with Chick Webb's band.

She later became famous as a scat singer, vocalizing nonsense syllables in rhythm, and performed with most of the great musicians of the time.

She recorded the song books of such composers as Cole Porter, Harold Arlen,

Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, George and Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, and Johnny Mercer.

Over the years, Fitzgerald won 13 Grammy Awards and many other honors, including the National Medal of Arts, presented to her in 1987 by President Reagan.



**GOVERNOR PATRICK SWORN IN**  
Deval Patrick takes the oath of office as Massachusetts governor as his wife, Diane, holds the Bible outside the Statehouse in Boston last week. With his hand on a Bible once owned by John Quincy Adams, Patrick was sworn in as Massachusetts' first Black governor, and only the second Black elected governor in U.S. history. The Bible that Patrick used as he repeated the oath of office had been given to Adams by slaves from the Spanish ship *Amistad* who revolted in 1839.

# Sharpton considers running for president

NEW YORK (AP) - Civil rights activist Al Sharpton said Monday he is seriously considering a run for president. "I don't hear any reason not to," Sharpton, 52, said in an interview during an urban affairs conference sponsored by another civil rights leader, Rev. Jesse Jackson.

"If we're talking about the urban agenda, can you tell me anybody else in the field who's representing that right now?" Sharpton asked. "We clearly have a reason to run, and whether we do it or not we'll see over the next couple of months."

Sharpton mounted a long-shot bid for the White House in 2004, in which his wit and fiery denunciation of President Bush often enlivened Democratic primary debates. He dropped out of the race after losing several state primaries and endorsed the eventual nominee, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry.

Despite widespread interest in the likely candidacy of another influential Black Democrat, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, Sharpton said he's heard little substantive discussion of issues that might influence



his decision about running.

"Right now we're hearing a lot of media razzle dazzle," Sharpton said. "I'm not hearing a lot of meat, or a lot of content. I think when the meat hits the fire, we'll find out if it's just fat or if there's some real meat there."

Sharpton said the candidate who impressed him most so far was former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, who has made poverty the central issue of his campaign.

Sharpton ran for the Senate from New York in 1988, 1992 and 1994, and ran for New York City mayor in 1997.

## LVBHS

(Continued from Page 2) presently has a total membership of over 50, including many who are charter members.

The LVBHS believes that it is important to preserve the history created by Black pioneers that formed places like the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino, and the Historic Westside community of Las Vegas, along with residents that broke the segregation barriers in housing and employment.

In the past two years, LVBHS has gathered numerous collections of artifacts, etc., from community members. The items have been

preserved and will be displayed at seminars, forums, lectures, and workshops presented in schools and community gatherings hosted by organization volunteers.

Individuals attending the Gathering are asked to bring items to add to the archive or submit information of interest that is beneficial to the accurate recording and collection of information for the LVBHS.

The evening will be an opportunity for established residents to greet newcomers to the community and to share information and ideas. Last year more than 120 attended the Gathering.

Some of the collected items and photographs will be on view.

Nevada Partners will provide catering from its culinary training department.

General membership is \$25 for one year, associate membership is \$100, small business membership is \$250 and corporate membership is \$500. Event organizers are asking for a donation of \$25 from individuals attending the Gathering to aid in their fundraising efforts, primarily to preserve artifacts and establish a permanent home for the organization.

For more information, contact 435-3814.

## SBI

(Continued from Page 2) landscaping design, environmental conservation and land management, alternative energy resources and community relations.

The institute also assists youth with core skills for college preparation, teaches money management skills and emphasizes community service.

To ensure inner-city youth have a chance to participate, a select number of positions are reserved for teens living in the Enterprise Community neighborhoods throughout the area.

Successful applicants will be required to meet criteria set by program administrators and the Clark County School District. Require-

ments include, but are not limited to, satisfactory grade-point average, commitment to volunteerism and financial need. Participants will also be eligible for college scholarships at the close of the program.

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 2. Applications can be picked up at the

Clark County Government Center, 5th Floor, at 500 S. Grand Central Parkway; KCEP radio station at 330 W. Washington Ave and through the high school job banks.

For more information, contact the Clark County Community Resources Management Division at 455-2426 or 455-3096.

Capture The Moments  
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