Jackson spats return to court

LAS VEGAS (AP) - A battle over ownership of Michael Jackson memorabilia is headed back to a Nevada courtroom, where the King of Pop is seeking the return of items withheld from an auction of family items, court documents show.

Jackson's sister, singer Janet Jackson, also is seeking the return of items held back during a May 30-31 memorabilia auction at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.

District Court Judge Elizabeth Gonzalez ordered 60 items impounded at the Clark County Courthouse, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported Monday, while she sorts out ownership and decides whether to punish the company that brought the items to auction.

Gonzalez scheduled a July 16 contempt-of-court trial after deciding June 12 that Universal Express Inc. of Boca Raton, Fla., violated earlier court orders to withhold some of the more than 1,100 items offered at auction, according to the court record.

L. Joe Coppedge, a Las Vegas lawyer for New York-based Guernsey's auction house, said Monday that the auctioneer had no stake in the continuing dispute and was complying with the court order to deliver the contested items.

"Per the judge's order, we have delivered 35 items claimed by Janet Jackson and 23 items claimed by Michael Jackson, with two in transit to Las Vegas," Coppedge told The Associated Press.

Overall auction sales were estimated at more than $1 million, topped by Michael Jackson's black, military style coat with an "M" crest. Universal reported the jacket fetched $20,400.

Michael Jackson items withheld following a last-minute court battle included a steamer trunk of the pop star's personal effects, his personal collection of Three Stooges photos, sheet music signed by participants in the "We are the World" charity fundraiser, and a piece of Australian aboriginal art that Jackson received in 1987 to mark record sales of his "Thriller" album.

Janet Jackson items withheld included the original certificate of her marriage to singer James DeBarge, high school notes, and script pages from her 1984 appearance on the "Diff'rent Strokes" television series.

Gonzalez had accepted a confidential settlement May 30 allowing the auction to go forward, but prohibiting Universal Express from "selling, giving, conveying or transferring by any means" the 25 items specified by Michael Jackson's lawyers.

Under the settlement, which had been confidential, Jackson's lawyers dropped their effort to block the auction.

In a June 12 hearing in Las Vegas, the judge ordered the settlement to be enforced, made Janet Jackson a party to the agreement, and ordered Universal Express to pay some of Michael Jackson's legal expenses.

Universal Express lawyer David DeToffol of New York has denied violating Gonzalez's order and instructed Guernsey's to return the items to Universal Express, court records show.

DeToffol and a Universal Express lawyer in Las Vegas did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

In another development, lawyers told Gonzalez that a dispute remained in New Jersey Superior Court over ownership of the items originally stored in an Oxnard, Calif., warehouse.

They said several parties had sued New Jersey businessman Henry Vaccaro, who sold the memorabilia to Universal Express in 2006 after a four-year legal battle with Jackson family members.

Gonzalez said she would notify the New Jersey court about the items she wanted brought to the Las Vegas courthouse, and said other unsold items could be returned to Universal Express.

Hospital

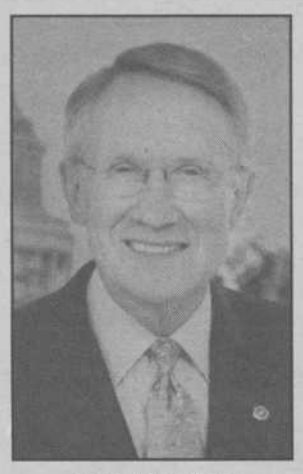
(Continued from Page 1)

Chernof said.

The federal government has threatened to pull Medicare and Medi-Cal funding, and an upcoming inspection could decide the matter.

The county Board of Supervisors has also sharply criticized health officials about conditions at the hospital, and the board ordered them to come up with a contingency plan should it be closed.

King-Harbor was built several years after the 1965 Watts riot to bring health care to poor, minority communities in South Los Angeles.



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Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman and Freda Payne are among the high-powered individuals scheduled to attend and participate in the Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League's second annual gala 6 p.m. Saturday at the Bellagio Hotel and Casino. Reid, Berkley and Goodman will be honored for their political accomplishments. Payne will perform a "Tribute to Ella Fitzgerald." The gala will raise funds to endow youth, senior and recreational programs at the William Pearson Community Center under construction.

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