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Final Edition

Anchorage Daily News

Thursday, April 19, 2007

BREAKING NEWS AT ADN.COM

Alaska's Newspaper

A fateful step

FIRST IN A FOUR-PART SERIES

Veetoune "Tim" Mokhantha, a North Slope roustabout, was trapped in oil-rig machinery in March of last year. This is the story of that accident and its aftermath.

19-year-old laborer, just 3 months on the Slope, takes one misstep and finds himself fouled in a drill rig auger

By WESLEY LOY
Anchorage Daily News

On the drilling rig, most of the guys knew Veetoune Mokhantha as Tim. Just Tim.

He was 19, and had been working on the rig on the frozen edge of nowhere for just three months.

He was a roustabout. In the oil patch, that means grunt. Laborer. You get good and dirty as a roustabout.

But you also get paid, seriously paid, and Mokhantha was thrilled to have scored a \$24-an-hour job with Nabors Industries, one of the world's top drilling contractors.

It was serious money for the teenage son of immigrant parents from Laos — a kid crazy for fast cars and, most of all, fast motorcycles. Rig pay sure as heck beat the \$14 an hour he'd made in a previous job in a nursing home.

Like most young guys, he was too alive to give much thought to dying. Too indestructible to fully appreciate the danger of working on a clanging, steaming machine on the North Slope tundra. He never saw the grisly ac-

cident coming.

It was a little over a year ago, very early on March 25, 2006.

Rig 14-E was punching a wildcat well south of Cape Simpson, in a remote expanse of federal land known as the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The nearest town of any size was Barrow, about 50 roadless miles to the west.

Tim and the other hands on Nabors Rig 14-E were feeling pretty good. Their two-week shift was just about over, and the next day Tim would fly home to Anchorage for two weeks of rest and fun.

That's the way it rolls for most Slope workers — two weeks on, two weeks off — and Tim liked it.

With spring in sight, it was still brutally cold on the Slope, minus 22 that night.

On the enclosed rig, however, it was toasty, at least 70 degrees. Tim wore regular street clothes underneath a flame-retardant jumpsuit.

He started his 12-hour shift at midnight.



Mokhantha

THE SERIES

Today: Rig accident traps young roustabout

Friday: Help is mobilized

Saturday: Desperate choices

Sunday: Angry aftermath

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CHILLING INSIGHT INTO MASS MURDER

Video reveals a 'sick mind'

Cho mailed package to NBC News between shootings at Virginia Tech

By LISA ANDERSON
Chicago Tribune

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Days before he massacred 32 people at Virginia Tech University and took his own life, Cho Seung-Hui concocted a vicious and meticulous multimedia plan for how he hoped to be remembered. He got his wish Wednesday night.

Chillingly, according to a U.S. Postal Service time stamp, Cho mailed a package of documents and images to NBC News in New York during a two-hour break in his shooting spree Monday morning.

NBC News Wednesday evening released some of the 28 videos and 43 photographs that accompanied an 1,800-word screed of hate and resentment that "NBC Nightly News" anchor Brian Williams described as a "multimedia manifesto" from a "uniquely sick mind." While the material doesn't contain any images from Monday's shootings, Williams said much of it is too graphic to be shown on television.

In addition, a more detailed picture emerged Wednesday of Cho's mental health record and run-ins with campus police and teachers, indications that there were many signs he was headed for trouble. Documents uncovered by ABC News showed that in December 2005, a Virginia magistrate had deemed Cho mentally ill, in need of



NBC / The Associated Press

This video image broadcast by NBC News on Wednesday shows Virginia Tech gunman Cho Seung-Hui and was part of a package that included 28 videos, 43 photos and a 23-page manifesto he sent to the network.

Abortion decision divides Alaskans

By JULIA O'MALLEY
Anchorage Daily News

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling Wednesday upholding a federal ban on a controversial abortion procedure brought encouragement to some conservative Alaska lawmakers and anti-abortion groups, while abortion rights advocates fear it as an encroachment on women's rights.

The reactions, which in many ways were predictable on an issue that has long divided Alaskans, were to a court opinion that upheld the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, the very name of which is often enough to stir emotional debate.

On the floor of the Alaska Senate in Juneau, Gene Therriault, a Republican from North Pole, was so pleased with the decision he read a passage from a newspaper story about the decision.

"The one line that caught my attention is it's the first time the court has allowed a limitation on the type of abortion service," he said in an interview later. "That may cause different states to look at the full slate of methods (through which) abortions are provided."

In Anchorage, Planned Parenthood sent out a statement condemning the ruling, which came in a 5-4 court opinion.

"This decision is so broad,"

See Back Page, ABORTION



CHARLES DHARAPAK / The Associated Press

Students and other mourners take part Tuesday in a candlelight vigil after Monday's shootings at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. More details emerged Wednesday about Cho Seung-Hui's past mental health issues and his myriad problems on campus.

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Top National International News

Hormone therapy linked to cancer

Two studies released Wednesday suggest that going off hormone therapy significantly reduces a woman's chances of developing ovarian cancer as well as breast cancer. **Page A-3**

Baghdad car bombs kill 183

Five car bombs exploded in and around Iraq's capital, killing at least 183 people and injuring more than 220 in the deadliest day since U.S. and Iraqi forces launched a much-publicized security crackdown two months ago. **Page A-6**

Iranian court OKs killing 'morally corrupt'

The Iranian supreme court has overturned the murder convictions of six members of a prestigious state militia who killed five people they considered "morally corrupt." **Page A-6**

BlackBerry users left in the dark

Tuesday night's BlackBerry blackout revealed just how professionally and emotionally dependent so many people had become on their pocket-sized electronic lifelines. **Page F-1**

White Sox pitcher hurls a no-hitter

Mark Buehrle pitched the first no-hitter of the season — and he was nearly perfect too. The Chicago left-hander faced the minimum 27 batters in a 6-0 victory over Texas. **Page C-1**

Lacking dough for New York residence, artsy couple craft home from bread truck

Wood-burning stove, bamboo floors and Southwestern decor

By ERIKA HAYASAKI
Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK — Their home is a purple bread truck in Brooklyn, parked between a hearse and a yellow Volkswagen bug. The 100-square-foot pad is outfitted with bamboo floors, solar power and a full-size bed.

The two artists who live here do so without a toilet or kitchen. When temperatures plummet outside, their seltzer water and soy milk freeze. They cook vegetable mini-pizzas on a wood-burning stove and shower at a nearby gym. They access the Internet on a laptop hooked up to a hand-held Treo phone that serves as a modem.

Angel Hess, a photographer, and girlfriend Theresa Magario, a poet and sculptor, came to New York from small towns to live big dreams. They met, fell in love and fretted over paying rent in a city where a 400-square-foot apartment can run \$2,100 a month or more.

Hess, 28, couldn't afford more than \$600, and Magario, 24, could pay even less. Both had bounced from room to room, living with random roommates found online.



CAROLYN COLE / Los Angeles Times

Hess wrote his Web site, purple53.com, on his truck. Taggers have added flourishes to the rolling work in progress.

"I was stressed out," said Hess, who also makes jewelry. "I said I'm not going to waste the money anymore. I started thinking about getting a house in another location but I still couldn't get loans. Then I started thinking about trucks, and train cars, and containers — just

See Page A-5, BREAD TRUCK