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Title **A Phone Executive Assails Bell System In His Suicide Note**

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Abstract T. O. Gravitt commits suicide and leaves behind a note accusing Bell System of misdeeds.

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A Phone Executive Assails Bell System In His Suicide Note

SAN ANTONIO, Tex., Nov. 18 (AP) — The chief executive in Texas for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company left a suicide note that said, "Watergate is a gnat compared to the Bell System," a lawyer and a colleague said today.

T. O. Gravitt of Dallas, 51-year-old Southwestern Bell vice president for Texas, died of carbon monoxide poisoning on Oct. 17.

His suicide note says there were Bell contributions to politicians, and that highly placed Bell executives used company jets for personal affairs. And it makes a cryptic reference to a "slush fund."

A Bell spokesman said that the company had no comment on the letter.

Pat Malone, a lawyer who represents the Gravitt family, confirmed the existence of the letter and its authorship. James H. Ashley, a dismissed Bell executive and a friend of Mr. Gravitt, said that published reports on the contents had been accurate.

\$25-Million Suit Filed

Mr. Gravitt was under investigation by his company at the time of his death. Mr. Ashley was subsequently dismissed in the same investigation. Now, Mr. Ashley and Mr. Gravitt's family have filed a \$25-million damage suit against Southwestern Bell, saying that a company conspiracy resulted in Mr. Gravitt's death.

Mr. Ashley said the Gravitt family had brought him the letter, which has been turned over to lawyers, after Mr. Gravitt shut his garage door, climbed into a car and turned on the ignition. The contents of the letter were published locally without mentioning names.

One passage in the letter says: "Slush fund, \$50 a month, \$1,000 increase in salary."

Mr. Ashley said, "T.O. [Mr. Gravitt] was referring to \$1,000 salary hikes granted Bell executives at the supervisory level with the clear understanding each would give \$50 a month to the political slush fund."

Mr. Gravitt's suicide note also dealt with personal problems.

The company has made a general denial of allegations in the suit filed by Mr. Ashley and the Gravitt family. Bell said that the company investigation had implicated Mr. Gravitt in the use of personal expenses, and handling of Bell supplies and purchases. The company said loss of company funds "was not significant."

In the suit, the plaintiffs deny Mr. Gravitt or Mr. Ashley were ever dishonest in their phone company dealings.