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FROM PAGE ONE

## TV, travel advances make Geographic Society a relic

### Once one of Chicago's highest-profile organizations, the 101-year-old society now houses its treasures in a single cabinet drawer.

When its paid executive director retired to rejoin a closer world than a year ago, the society chose not to replace him and closed its office, hiring a manager from its ranks to manage its affairs. That's what the question of what to do with the 101-year-old society's treasures.

Henry Patten, a term-of-the-year award winner who has been a globe-trotting lifestyle, bought the tablets in 1988 when such tablets in antiquity was still legal. A member of the society, he presented the tablets to the organization in a custom-made, black-leather-covered, glass-fronted box, each tablet given a set of its own to cradle and protect.

Covered with wedge-shaped condensation markings pushed into the clay by ancient scribes, the tablets are used primarily by scholars. The writings, mostly records of commercial travel, are a sort of brief attention of daily life in Babylon, one of humanity's earliest civilizations.

From the start, when Chicago educators and women's rights advocate Zonia Baber founded the society in 1898, it attracted many of the city's intellectual, social and business elite members.

It pushed actively and effectively for some of the world's first efforts to preserve ecological treasures, helping to establish the Chicago region's superior system of forest preserves and fighting to protect the Indiana Dunes and Starved Rock areas from destruction by developers.

Its main appeal to most rank-and-file members was as a repository for everyday items during the long, dark winter months of pre-televised, pre-economy jet travel days.

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Children examine a tablet from the Geographic Society of Chicago's first tour to Yellowstone National Park, in which 43 members participated. Such tours were popular during the society's heyday in the early 1900s.

By the time that night, proof that he had not been closing arguments Tuesday.

After they dragged that proof man and two his body to show they dropped it right in front of their defense of Christianity and everything most people in this country stand for," Henry said.

King did not testify, and only three witnesses were called in his defense. His lawyers apparently planned to focus their efforts on saving King's life in the post-trial phase.

In each, Byrd, who was unemployed and had served time in prison, became a martyr. His funeral drew a thousand people from across the country, including politicians and activists.

Social segregation has long been a tradition in the East Texas town, where white, slightly outnumbered blacks. They work together, attend school together, and even came together to meet an African-American lawyer two years ago. But that social, white line in an enclave in the center of Jasper and downtown, surrounded by black neighbors.

"This is one of the worst tragedies in our history," said a member of a racial pride group, King had played much more long before he and his former cellmate, Lawrence Russell Brewer, and childhood friend, Shavers Aline, were being convicted of the kidnap-murder of a black man.

"If we get told justice, the death penalty people will begin to hate. We will never forget it, but we can move on."

The slaying last June recalled one of the most notorious night riders, Jasper residents feared being portrayed as one of the most racist communities in the nation. Still, the case served as a catalyst for change in the town, as blacks and whites spent months praying together and working to find solutions.

The guilty verdict, they said, is their vindication.

"The crime was horrible and the reason behind it was horrible. We've got some strong opinions about it," Jasper County District Attorney Guy Jones Gray said after the verdict. "The jury's message is that we will not let up with this kind of crime until we've got it all out."

Prosecutors painted King as a militant racist who was trying to organize a Ku Klux Klan-type gang in Jasper.

## Counsel

targeting five Cabinet members.

Suddenly, the longtime Republican complaints that independent counsels have too much power are making a lot more sense to supporters and critics alike.

Clinton was not indicted by the independent counsel, but he and Clinton were both accused of oversteering and underhandness during their long battle.

Wary of turning the proceedings into a referendum on Starr, Thompson promised Tuesday that the hearings would not turn into "the Ken Starr show."

The Starr investigation, though, complicates the debate. Starr's aggressive methods have not only have spurred many Democrats to join the longtime Republican argument that the statute needs drastic reform.

But Republicans believe that many of the reforms they once supported would now be interpreted as criticisms of Starr, and they are unwilling to support any such endeavor. This further endangers any agreement on reform, which is the statute's only hope for survival.

"I think it's a trap, and I don't believe that if it were presented in some watered-down form, the president would sign it," Gillmore said. "And there certainly would not be a two-thirds majority to override a veto of this horrible, horrible statute."

The House will begin its own hearings next week.

Whichever action Congress takes would almost certainly not affect ongoing independent counsels investigations under the current law.

Still undecided is the stance of the Clinton administration on the law. Clinton enthusiastically backed the independent counsel law at the beginning of his presidency, praising it as a good government reform and helping assure its enactment in 1994.

But over the past five years, independent counsels have done severe damage to Clinton, nearly destroying his presidency and

"I don't think anything will be gained at this time particularly in abandoning this law," Latham said. "The purpose that led to the creation of this statute in 1994 is no less worthy today than it was then, and that purpose is better government and better public trust in government."

An array of reform bills have been offered. Many want to make the expensive, high-profile investigations harder to start and easier to stop.

It is relatively easy to ignite an independent counsel investigation. The attorney general, after a relatively superficial inquiry, must trigger an independent counsel appointment if the merely finds that "further investigation is warranted." Many have proposed a higher threshold.

To curtail the length of the investigation, some suggest limiting them to two years, unless a prosecutor can justify a longer period to extend it to a court to end it if it or she believes it has gone on too long.

Another common complaint is the sheer number of people who are covered by the statute, including the dozens of agency heads and other relatively anonymous officials. Critics want to cut this back, for example by limiting independent counsel investigations only to the president, vice president and attorney general.

The question is whether reform can be agreed on a single set of changes and, if so, whether they can overcome those who want to shut down the system altogether.

But even if the independent counsel statute is allowed to remain in place that does not mean it will never rise again.

"I would guess it will blow, and that over a period of time a revised, revamped, new and improved statute of some sort will be passed," said former independent counsel Michael Zolotor. "I think there is a need for this sort of statute."

Tribune correspondents Mitchell Dornier and William Neillie contributed to this report.

## Dragging

Commuter road trip 1

to the residence of Jasper.

Family members said justice had been served.

"This takes a lot of pressure off us. It's a lot of burden relieved," said Byrd's daughter, Bessie Malone. "We're fighting the battle, but we're not over yet." Two other men are to be tried in the slaying.

Jasper returned to the courtroom Tuesday afternoon to begin hearing testimony in the grand jury phase of the trial. They are expected to decide Thursday whether King should be put to death by lethal injection or sentenced to life in prison.

It will take a death sentence, some residents said, to fully heal the pain he has caused in Jasper, a lumber town of 4,400 residents about 10 miles northwest of Houston.

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John William King is led from court Tuesday in Jasper, Texas, after being convicted of the kidnap-murder of a black man.

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Photo from Geographic Society of Chicago