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B NEWS

Dallas woman's 'whistle-blowing' to draw honor
JIM MORRIS
Staff

A Dallas-area woman who disclosed a giant utility's improper disposal and sales of toxic coatings was to receive the Cavallo Prize for Moral Courage today.

Linda Porter of Argyle will receive \$10,000 at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., for revealing unsafe practices by Dallas-based TU Electric, owner of the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant southwest of Fort Worth.

The award, given since 1988 by the Cavallo Foundation of Cambridge, Mass., recognizes "whistle-blowers" who jeopardize their careers or lives to inform the public about health or social justice issues. Porter is the first award recipient from Texas; five other winners will share \$23,000 this year.

In a telephone interview Wednesday from Washington, Porter said the award is "like a gift from heaven. It tells me that ... the work I'm doing is not in vain and that somebody is listening."

Porter, 42, was working for Houston-based **Brown & Root Inc.**, general contractor at Comanche Peak, in the mid-1980s when she learned she and her co-workers were being exposed to **asbestos** through protective coatings they were applying to plant surfaces.

She later learned - and reported - that the utility was selling or giving away thousands of gallons of the same coatings to the public, without warning people about the potential health risks.

In a settlement with the Texas Attorney General's Office, the utility agreed to run newspaper advertisements and to buy back the coatings.

Porter and other ex-workers at the plant are suing Brown & Root, TU Electric and the coating manufacturers.

Porter also claimed that TU Electric was unsafely disposing of
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hazardous materials in landfills on the plant grounds, threatening
groundwater and a nearby reservoir.

TU Electric denied there was a threat, but was fined \$10,000 by
the Texas Water Commission in 1989 for operating a hazardous waste
landfill without a permit.

Porter blames her firing in 1988 on her disclosures, an
allegation denied by both Brown & Root and TU Electric.

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