

JAPAN

Former sheriff's deputy gets 15 years

COURTS James Grady Gillie, 56, is convicted of indecency with a child.

By **MELODY McDONALD**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Jurors sentenced a former Tarrant County sheriff's deputy to 15 years in prison Friday after finding him guilty of indecency with a child for fondling a 13-year-old girl.

James Grady Gillie, 56, a certified peace officer who worked for years in the booking section of the Tarrant County Jail, was on trial this week in state District Judge Sharen Wilson's court.

Prosecutors Alana Minton and Shawn Paschall portrayed Gillie as a man who had "a very unnatural attraction" to a 13-year-old girl, even promising to leave his wife and run away with the teen. Prosecutors contended that he molested the girl over several years.

In court, defense attorneys Harold Johnson and Michelle Audet conceded that Gillie's relationship with the girl was abnormal and unhealthy, but they said it never reached a level of sexual contact.

Johnson and Audet could not be reached to comment.

According to court testimony, authorities with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department began an internal and criminal investigation into allegations that Gillie was having an inappropriate relationship with a young girl in February, after her father and

More on COURTS on 10B

COURTS

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stepmother took an audiocassette to their agency.

The couple, who have six daughters between them, had put a tape-recording device on their home phone after some of their daughters began to act sneaky when taking phone calls, their father testified. Wanting to make sure that the girls were not involved in drugs or alcohol, the father said, he began recording their conversations.

He and his wife were stunned, the father said, when they heard Gillie talking inappropriately to the girls. On the tape, which was played for

jurors, Gillie can be heard saying that he wanted to "make love" to one of the girls.

The parents eventually contacted the Internal Affairs Division of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department.

Authorities told the parents to bring them the tape. Authorities testified that after hearing it they began an internal affairs investigation and suspended Gillie with pay. Three days later, a criminal investigation was launched, and Gillie was arrested.

Gillie resigned from his job in February, about two weeks after his arrest.

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OBITUARIES

Patrick Andrew Couch



FORT WORTH — Patrick Andrew Couch, 32, an officer with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, died Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2002, at a Fort Worth hospital.

Funeral: 4 p.m. Friday in Laurel Land Memorial Chapel. Burial: Laurel Land Memorial Park. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Laurel Land

Funeral Home.

Patrick was a graduate of Southwest High School in Fort Worth. He served in the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department for nearly nine years. He was an avid traveler who enjoyed visiting new places with his family. He also enjoyed hunting and recreational shooting and had recently developed an interest in photography. Patrick's sense of humor will be greatly missed by all those who knew and loved him.

Survivors: Parents, Bobby G. and Virginia E. Couch of Fort Worth; sister, Nancy Couch of Fort Worth; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Laurel Land Funeral Home
7100 Crowley Road, (817) 293-1350

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7100 Crowley Road, (817) 293-1350

Officials look to ease jail overcrowding

By NEIL STRASSMAN
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County commissioners decided Tuesday to look into using the Cold Springs jail facility and the closed Mansfield Community Correction Center to relieve possible overcrowding in the county's jails.

Jails in Tarrant County have about 3,270 full-time prisoners and about 120 who serve time on weekends or in work-release programs, but their

capacity is about 3,660 prisoners, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

The need to house certain prisoners separately and keep women and men segregated compounds the problem, and the amount of time that state prisoners stay in the county jails before being transferred to prison is increasing again, Anderson said.

"We're seriously looking at our options with the state prisoners beginning to back up," he said.

The Cold Springs facility north of downtown was closed in 1995 and refurbished four years later at a cost of \$1.6 million. The county's Community Supervision and Corrections Department, which runs probation programs, has been using the facility for offices.

"We need to look at how the space can be reconfigured to meet state jail standards," said Gary Kirby, county facilities manager.

The boot camp for proba-

tioners at the Mansfield Correction Center closed in 2001. The facility would also have to be remodeled if used for a jail, Kirby said.

The commissioners approved a contract to assess the needed renovations at the two facilities. Anderson said he expects to give a report in several weeks that addresses the county's jail needs through 2012.

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Thursday, February 6, 2003 | Star-Telegram

Hero honored by city lands in jail

By BILL TEETER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The day after he was recognized by city officials as a hero for saving a neighbor's life, a 19-year-old man was in Tarrant County Jail, accused of violating the terms of his probation on 2-year-old criminal charges, a sheriff's spokesman said Wednesday.

On Tuesday night as his parents watched, Leon Gonzales III received a plaque at a City Council meeting that recognized him for pulling a 73-year-old neighbor, who was in a wheelchair, from a blazing house on Dec. 29.

About 12:35 p.m. Wednesday, Gonzales was arrested at his May Street home on a probation-revocation warrant, said Terry Grisham, executive administrator of the Tarrant

JAILED A 19-year-old man is arrested the day after being honored for saving a life.

County Sheriff's Department.

In February 2001, Gonzales was sentenced to 48 months of probation for vehicle theft and 36 months of deferred adjudication for a related charge involving an accusation of engaging in organized crime.

Grisham said Gonzales' probation was revoked for technical violations, not additional crimes.

In an interview Wednesday evening, Gonzales said that probation officers found out that he had stopped going to a three-month drug treatment program that was part of the probation terms.

"I felt pretty good last night with the heroism award. It felt

good. I feel real bad now. I should have finished [the treatment], but I made some wrong decisions," he said.

Gonzales began the treatment program for marijuana use on Nov. 2; the last time he attended was Dec. 2. He stopped going, he said, because he was accumulating "write-ups" for prohibited behavior such as keeping a pierced tongue and falling asleep during classroom sessions.

The Fire Department personnel who prepared the citation for the heroism award were not aware of Gonzales' legal trouble, but it wouldn't have mattered, said fire Lt. Kent Worley.

"That's not even an area we would get into. What we did was strictly based on his actions on Dec. 29," Worley said.

The timing of the arrest was a coincidence, and the deputy who arrested Gonzales did not know about the award, Grisham said.

"It might help him with the judge, but it didn't help him with the ride," Grisham said.

Because bail is not set in such cases, Gonzales must stay in jail until a judge reviews his case and decides whether to alter the probation terms or send him to prison, Grisham said.

Although his arrest is a major setback, Gonzales said, the award will have a lasting, positive effect.

"It is something to be proud of and to remember in the future," Gonzales said.

Staff writer Anna Tinsley contributed to this report.

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Inmate slashes self with razor

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — One of two brothers accused in the random shootings of two men in November was treated at a hospital Wednesday after cutting his arm with a razor while in a Tarrant County Jail holdover cell.

Billy Dwayne Thomas, 30, was in a holdover cell waiting to meet with an investigator from the district attorney's office when he was discovered bleeding heavily from a 1-centimeter cut that nicked an artery in his left arm, Chief Deputy Bob Knowles said.

Investigators believe that Thomas obtained the blade by dismantling a jail-issued plastic razor.

Knowles said it is possible that Thomas had been bleeding for 15 to 30 minutes before a jailer on hourly patrol found

JAIL A murder suspect is under suicide watch after cutting his left arm with a razor blade in a holdover cell Wednesday morning.

him. Thomas had reportedly lost a liter of blood, Knowles said.

"There was such a significant amount of blood that he lost, it was just a matter of minutes before he would not be able to be revived," Knowles said.

Thomas was treated at John Peter Smith Hospital and released back to the jail's custody Wednesday afternoon. He was being kept under suicide watch.

Thomas and his brother, Claude Thomas, 29, have been incarcerated at the Tarrant County Jail on \$1.5 million bail

each since November.

They are charged with murder in the Nov. 13 shooting of a man in the 2000 block of Bomar Avenue and attempted murder in the wounding of a bicyclist in Cobb Park about an hour earlier.

Investigators are also looking into whether the brothers were involved in the apparently random fatal shootings of another man and woman that same month. Physical evidence is still being tested, homicide Detective Jose Hernandez said.

In a search of Billy Thomas' jail cell Wednesday, Knowles said, jailers found three stamped and addressed letters that had never been sent. The letters, addressed to family members, including his brother, Claude, appeared to be suicide letters, Knowles said.

"In each one of those let-

ters, it more or less indicated he felt he was going to be railroaded and didn't want to continue living if that was the case," Knowles said.

Thomas' attorney, Mary B. Thornton, did not return a message seeking comment.

Knowles said Thomas had not shown any suicidal tendencies or expressed any such threats.

He said that an administrative and criminal review of the incident is being conducted to make sure policies were properly followed.

"So far from everything I have seen as of right now, I would say everyone followed procedures exactly as they should," Knowles said. "I think their timely response and quick actions saved a life."

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Friday, February 7, 2003

Veteran Arlington lieutenant to run Tarrant sheriff's patrol

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson has selected a former Arlington police lieutenant as chief deputy over patrol to succeed Leon "Rick" Flowers, who resigned last month.

Jay Six, who had worked more than 24 years with the Arlington Police Department before resigning Friday, began his new job with the Sheriff's Department on Monday.

Six, 49, will oversee about 50 deputies who patrol unincorporated Tarrant County.

Six said the job offer from Anderson, a former spokesman for Arlington police, came as an "absolute surprise."

Six said that after a great deal of "prayerful thought" and consultations with his family,

SHERIFF Chief Deputy Jay Six will oversee about 50 deputies who patrol unincorporated Tarrant County.

he decided to retire from Arlington and take the job.

"I was working as patrol lieutenant on the east side, and everything was great and I loved my job, but this opportunity came knocking," Six said.

Anderson said that he had planned to move Flowers to another position, but that Flowers resigned.

"He left on his own, made the decision to move on," Anderson said. "I wished him the best and told him if he ever wanted to return, the door would be open for him to come back."

Flowers said Thursday night

that he resigned because he felt he "was being involuntary demoted."

"I was going to be placed in confinement and reduced to a lieutenant. Rather than going through being demoted and being placed in a position where I really felt I wasn't going to be serving a useful purpose, I chose to resign," he said.

Six was a patrol officer for two years with the University of Texas at Arlington Police Department before joining the city police force in 1978.

He has lived in Arlington since 1976. He and his wife of almost 27 years, Gwynna, have three daughters.

Staff writer Peyton D. Woodson contributed to this report.

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Jail's air system repairs get OK

JAIL Tarrant County officials are moving ahead to upgrade faulty air conditioning in a downtown jail, easing hot-house conditions before summer 2004.

By **NEIL STRASSMAN**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Bucking a Southern tradition of steamy, sweltering jails, Tarrant County commissioners Tuesday approved a \$1.9 million renovation of a county lock-up that heated up last summer.

For months last summer, the air conditioners on the top three floors of the Thomas R. Windham Building at 350 W. Belknap St. did not work properly, leaving inmates and jailers to sweat it out.

Huge water-cooler fans and box fans were set up in halls and cellblocks to cool the jail floors that the county leases from the city. Jailers complained of dizziness and nausea, but the temperature never exceeded the 85-degree maximum the state allows in county jails.

"We benefited from a mild summer," said Sheriff Dee Anderson. "If there had been a

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JAIL

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string of back-to-back 100-degree days, we might have had some serious problems."

Even so, it was warmer than what people were used to, Anderson said.

The bottom four floors of the building, which serve as Fort Worth police headquarters, run on a different air system and were not affected.

The jail renovation includes a revamped air-conditioning system, replacement of equipment used to remove smoke from the building in case of fire and modernization of the building's elevators.

The work is expected to begin in late spring.

Prisoners housed in the building — usually fewer than 200 — will have to be moved to one of the county's other jails during the upgrades. A mix of high- and low-risk prisoners are housed in the downtown facility.

Sheriff's officials and county commissioners are concerned about the timing of the renovation because of overcrowding in the jail, caused largely by state prisoners

spending more time at the facility before they are transferred to prisons.

Jails in Tarrant County have nearly 3,300 full-time prisoners and about 100 who serve time on weekends or in work-release programs. The jail capacity is about 3,660 prisoners.

County officials said that beginning in June, the Cold Springs jail facility north of downtown, closed in 1995 and refurbished four years later, can be used for low-risk prisoners.

The county's Community Supervision and Corrections Department, which runs probation programs, has been using the facility for offices, but they are expected to vacate by April, said David Phillips, the county's assistant facilities director. It will take another 60 days to recertify Cold Springs as a jail, he said.

The renovation should be completed by December, Phillips said.

Although almost all of the state's prisons are not air conditioned, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards requires that temperatures in jails be maintained between 65 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

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Sheriff says jails pushing capacity

JAIL Tarrant County needs to build additional jails to handle a projected 24 percent increase in prisoners by 2012, county commissioners are told.

By NEIL STRASSMAN
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Tarrant County needs to build additional jails to handle a projected 24 percent increase in prisoners by 2012, Sheriff Dee Anderson told county commissioners Tuesday.

But the county could run out of cells and bunks as soon as this year, the sheriff said.

"A dramatic increase in the jail population has put an urgency into this that we didn't see just 12 months ago," Anderson said, citing a 20 percent increase in inmates over the past year.

The county should use the \$14.6 million approved by voters in a 1998 bond package to build a new facility with about 1,200 beds at the Green Bay jail unit, which is southwest of Loop 820 and Interstate 35W, Anderson said.

A new maximum security jail with 480 beds and an additional 96 medical beds should also be built, Anderson said.

Funding for that building should be part of a proposed county bond package that should also include funding for a new civil courts building, he said.

"We will pursue this," County Judge Tom Vandergriff said.

Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said the county will "move forward as quickly as possible."

On Feb. 11, the county had 3,405 prisoners, with bunks for about 3,660 in its three jails, Anderson said. By 2012, Tarrant County will need about 5,000 jail beds for about 4,200 inmates, he said.

State law requires that some groups of prisoners be housed separately, so the county must maintain an excess capacity of about 5 percent to 10 percent, he said.

Classification of prisoners is a crucial issue, and the county's current bed-to-prisoner ratio does not allow enough flexibility to accommodate all of them, he said.

"This is a critical time for us," Anderson said.

A number of factors have contributed to the increase in prisoners, the sheriff said, including:

- Inmates spending more time in jail before trial because of a new state law that set a timetable for appointing attorneys for poor defendants.

- A slowdown of inmates leaving jail for state prisons.

- Parole-hearing delays when other charges are pending.

- A backlog of cases in some Tarrant County courts.

- Lengthy stays of inmates remanded by judges to the county jail from state prisons.

Based on current projections, the jail population will exceed the county's maximum

"This is a critical time for us."

—Dee Anderson
Tarrant County Sheriff

operating capacity this fiscal year, Anderson said.

A short-term solution would be the use of 384 beds in the county's minimum-security Cold Springs correctional facility north of downtown, Anderson said. The unit was closed in 1995 and refurbished four years later at a cost of \$1.6 million. The county's Community Supervision and Corrections Department, which administers probation programs, has been using the facility for offices and expects to leave by April.

Even so, that would only be a stopgap through 2005, he said.

The sheriff said he has met with judges, District Attorney Tim Curry and the parole board, has implemented an early release program for misdemeanor inmates and is

working with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to maximize the number of inmates sent to state prisons.

He has also contacted Denton County Sheriff Weldon Lucas to discuss using an idle 474-bed facility.

If construction of a new jail

building at Green Bay begins soon, the 1,200-bunk addition could be available within two years, he said.

Anderson said that downtown would be the preferred location for a maximum-security facility. He could not say how much its construction would cost. The price would vary depending on the location and whether additions or offices are included, he said.

"There's no way to estimate it now or get precise," he said.

A county-owned block just south of the newest jail, at 100 N. Lamar St., is under consideration, sheriff's officials said.

A June 2002 architect's "conceptual program" for a new maximum security jail building called for a three-story, above-ground building with almost 400 beds on each of the top two floors and a basement with a tunnel connection to the existing jail.

That 185,000-square-foot building would cost between \$28 million and \$32 million, the architects said.

Anderson said his proposal — for less than 500 maximum security beds and not quite 100 medical beds — would cost county taxpayers less than the architect's estimate.

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ETTA HULME

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Etta Hulme is the *Star-Telegram's* editorial cartoonist.
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Pinpointing 911 cellphone calls

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Ramon Garcia remembers the frustration of dealing with the frantic 911 cellphone call to the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department from a woman kidnapped by an acquaintance.

With a man in the background screaming at her to hang up the phone, the woman tried to direct dispatchers to where the armed man was taking her.

"She was throwing out bits and pieces of what was around her," said Garcia, a communications specialist with the department. "It was just a lot of 'There's a water tower!' or 'I'm passing some airplanes!'"

Luckily, Garcia said, the dis-

TECHNOLOGY Tracking technology gives dispatchers callers' longitude and latitude on a computerized aerial photo and map, saving time and perhaps lives.

patcher's familiarity with some of the landmarks the woman mentioned helped him determine she was being taken to Wise County, and authorities there were alerted.

Now, Tarrant County sheriff's officials say precious moments, which can sometimes mean the difference between life and death, can be saved.

A new system that integrates tracking technology from cellphone providers with the department's new Computer Aided Dis-

patch system makes locating 911 phone callers a snap.

Fully operational since last month, the system provides dispatchers a caller's longitude and latitude on a computerized aerial photo and map. Though it is not the only cellphone mapping system in the Metroplex, it is believed to be the most integrated CAD system of its kind in Tarrant County.

According to statistics from the Tarrant County 911 District, of the 33,710 911 calls fielded by sheriff's dispatchers in 2002, about 66 percent were from wireless phones.

"Tarrant County, in a nutshell, serves the vast majority of the unincorporated areas," said Astin Buchanan, information systems manager at the 911 district. "In those rural areas, you have a lot of folks carrying wireless phones to report incidents. Nothing wireline is easily accessible in many of those areas."

Sheriff's Lt. Robert Durko said one accident can generate 20 to 40 cellular 911 calls.

He said dispatchers previously received only the tower number through which a cellphone's call was placed, not the caller's phone number or location.

Dispatchers would then have to call

the cellular company to learn the location of the tower, Durko said. And even then, the caller could have been as far as 15 miles from the tower, he said.

"The big problem was, 'How do you locate a caller, especially when the caller is not familiar with the location they're in?'" Durko said.

In 1996, the Federal Communications Commission mandated that wireless companies provide location technology for 911 services. The first phase of the mandate required phone companies to make the cellphone customer's numbers immediately available to call centers.

The second phase required wireless companies to provide call centers with the caller's location.

"You hear all these stories about people who have sat in their cars for a day or two not knowing where they were," Durko said. "Even if they had a cellphone, without Phase 2 compliance, what good is it?"

Last month, New York's inability to track 911 cellular phone calls came under criticism after four teen-age boys drowned when their boat capsized as they rowed toward Hart Island. A brief cellphone conversation with 911 dispatchers indicated that the boat was taking in water, but dispatchers could not determine the boat's exact location, one reason that rescue efforts were delayed several hours.

So far, four of Tarrant County's six

major cellphone providers have fully implemented such technology in Tarrant County. The federal government is requiring the service be in place nationwide by October 2005.

In Texas, cellphone users pay a statewide 911 service charge of 50 cents per month. That money is then divvied up by the state's 911 Commission according to population.

The Tarrant County 911 District, which includes all cities that are partially or completely in Tarrant County, as well as Irving, is in the middle of a multimillion-dollar project to provide new call-taking equipment and enhanced mapping for the 36 primary call centers in its jurisdiction.

In 2002, 1,757,551 emergency calls flooded into the district's call centers, about 45 percent of them from wireless phones, Buchanan said.

Buchanan said that by the end of April, every call center should be equipped with mapping that automatically plots for dispatchers the location of a 911 cellular phone caller.

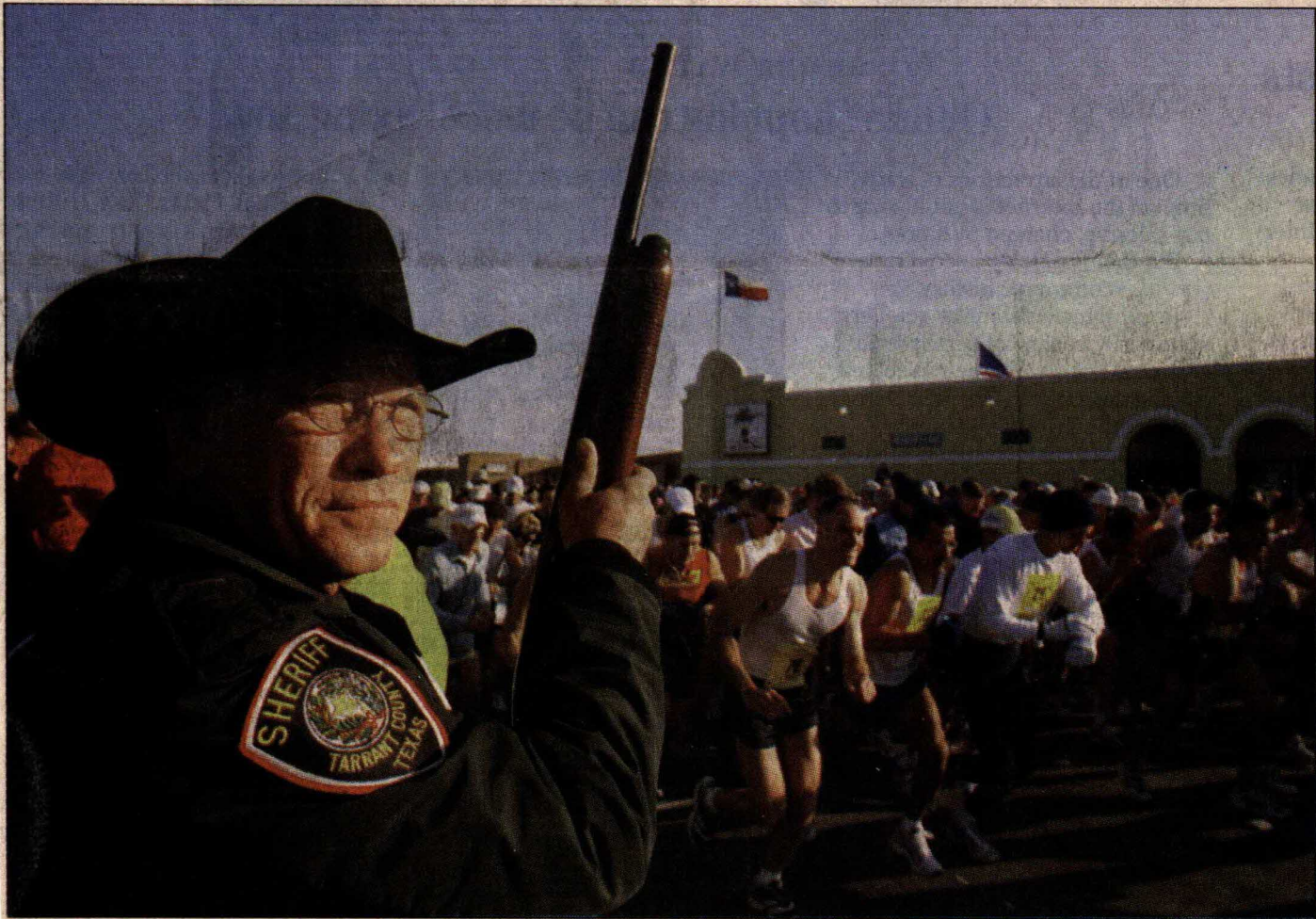
Buchanan said the system should prove vital for callers who may be unable to speak to dispatchers or who are unaware of their location.

"The mapping system can literally be accurate down to 9 to 10 meters, which is 30 feet," Buchanan said. "It's phenomenal stuff."

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25TH ANNUAL COWTOWN MARATHON

Runners start with a blast



SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM/RICHARD W. RODRIGUEZ

Garland Fugitt of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Posse fires a shotgun to start the 25th running of the Cowtown Marathon on Saturday in the Stockyards. More than 12,000 runners took part in the marathon, marathon relay, 10K and 5K races Saturday on a mild sunny morning. COVERAGE IN SECTION CC.

OBITUARY

ERNEST E. BLACKSHEAR
1940 - 2003

Ernest E. Blackshear, 62, went to be with loved ones in Heaven on Saturday, February 22, 2003.

Memorial Service: 9 a. m. Wednesday at Westside Victory Baptist Church, 6154 Meandering Road, River Oaks. Graveside service 1 p.m. Wednesday in Dallas-Fort Worth National; Cemetery, 2000 Mountain Parkway, Dallas, Texas. Visitation 6 -8 p.m. Tuesday at Winscott Road Funeral Home, 1001 Winscott Road.

Ernest E. Blackshear was born July 11, 1940, in California. After serving his country for 17 years in the Army, Ernie went to work as a deputy sheriff of Tarrant County, from which he was retired.

Survivors: Wife, Delane Blackshear; brother, Charles Blackshear and wife, Delinda; sister, Dolores Walter; and numerous children grandchildren, great-grandchildren and nephews.

Published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on 2/25/03.

Recruiter Position

There are four finalists who will be making presentations to the Command Staff throughout the month of February. They are Bill Rudolph, Kari Worrell, Martin Eivens and Eugena Cundiff.

They are required to present their ideas and goals of how to make this position more effective and successful. The position should be filled by early March. – Executive Chief Deputy Johnston



Sheriff's Office

2nd Annual

Awards Ceremony

February 27, 2003, 6:30 p.m.
Stockyard Station-Stampede Room

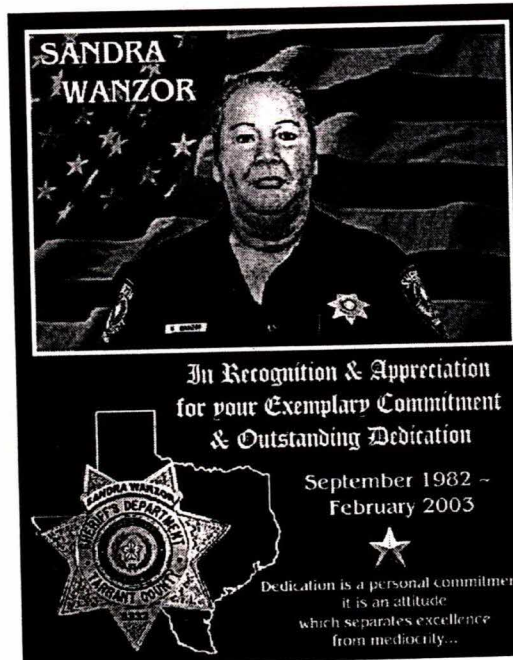
Business Casual

\$5 Per Person

Tickets Available

Through Your Supervisor

(Ticket money will be reimbursed at the door)



Saturday, March 1, 2003

Cheers & Jeers

Cheers: To the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, the Department of Livestock Recovery & Mounted Patrol, and deputy sheriffs Brinkman and Weston for helping the Cruelty Investigations Department of the Humane Society of North Texas. With their help, an anonymous tip of inhumane treatment of horses resulted in eight horses being rescued from neglect and abuse.
HSNT executive director **Tammy Hawley**,
Fort Worth

Tuesday, March 4, 2003 | Star-Telegram

LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Bad image

Every New Year's Eve, local law enforcement agencies implore the public not to walk outside at the stroke of midnight and fire weapons into the air as a part of their New Year's celebrations.

Occasionally, we are told, this ammunition fired into the air falls back to earth and injures or kills someone unexpectedly in a freak accident.

How incredibly hypocritical, then, to see Garland Fugitt of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Posse firing a shotgun into the air (Feb. 23 front-page photo) to start the 25th running of the Cowtown Marathon.

What's wrong with a regulation starter pistol, traditionally used at most track-and-field events?

David L. Boone, Roanoke

Arrests target identity theft

By **MELODY McDONALD**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Just after dawn Friday, law enforcement authorities entered a south Fort Worth home and plucked a hiding man from beneath a bed.

Charles Willie Johnson, 34, didn't know it at the time, but two of his aunts were already in custody. His mother soon would be, too. And his father. And his sister. And several cousins.

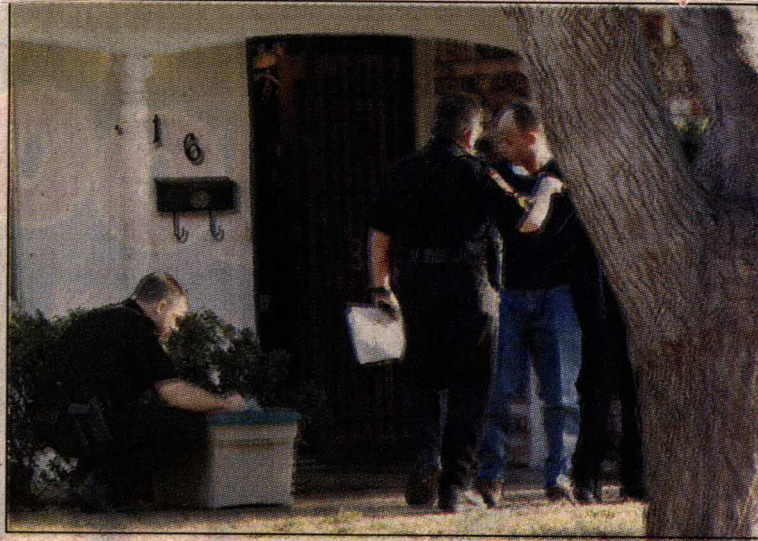
By 5 p.m. Friday, law enforcement offi-

IDENTITY The arrests capped an 18-month investigation by the Tarrant County district attorney's office.

cials had arrested 11 people, most of them related by blood or marriage, who are accused of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars in merchandise through a huge identity theft ring. One of the 11 was already in jail on an unrelated charge.

Three others remained at large, one of

More on **IDENTITY** on 11B



STAR-TELEGRAM/RALPH LAUER

A Tarrant County sheriff's deputy records evidence, left, as two other officers take Charles Willie Johnson into custody after an early-morning raid at a house in the 300 block of Chateau Drive. Suspects were arrested at a number of locations Friday in connection with an identity theft ring.



JESSIE JOHNSON



HARRY ISLAND



CHARLES JOHNSON



EVELYN JOHNSON



JUANITA JOHNSON



ROSIE JOHNSON



MARY JOHNSON



VIOLA
MACK



ROSIE
FOSTER



LASHAWN
JOHNSON



ROSA
MACK



DEON
HAWKINS



DEANDRA
CLARK



JONI
JOHNSON

IDENTITY

Continued from 1B

whom authorities were seeking in Oklahoma, where he now lives.

On Thursday, arrest warrants were issued for the 14 people, including five sisters and some of their children, after a Tarrant County grand jury indicted them on various charges.

Most are accused of stealing, buying or fabricating driver's licenses or identification cards, using them to open checking accounts at banks and then writing checks for at least \$190,000 worth of merchandise.

As the investigation continues, officials said, the value of checks found to be written using stolen identities could reach \$500,000.

Kevin McIntire, the Tarrant County district attorney's investigator who worked the case and spearheaded the roundup, said he hopes that the arrests will send a message to identity thieves.

"The people who do this will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," he said. "We hope this will show the people who think that identity theft is so easy and that nothing is being done about it."

Arrested Friday were Jessie Island Johnson, 54; Harry Lee Island, 58; Charles Willie Johnson, 34; Evelyn Marie Johnson, 32; Juanita Johnson, 52; Rosie Lee Johnson, 33; Mary Louise Johnson, 46; Viola Mack, 37; Rosie Lee Foster, 48; and Lashawn Renee Johnson, 29.

Most were in Tarrant County Jail with bail set at \$50,000 or

Who to call to report possible identity theft

■ The Federal Trade Commission, the agency responsible for receiving and processing complaints about identity theft. Trained counselors provide information on how to resolve problems and repair credit record damage. 877-IDTHEFT, or (877) 438-4338.

■ The three major credit bureaus — Equifax, (800) 525-6285; Experian, (888) 397-3742; Trans Union, (800) 680-7289. Ask them to place a fraud alert in your file so lenders and other credit report users will be careful before starting or changing accounts in your name.

■ Your bank, credit card company or any other financial institution. Ask to speak with someone in the security or fraud department and follow up with a letter. If necessary, close old accounts, open new ones and select new passwords and personal identification numbers (PINs).

■ Local police. File a police report and get a copy that can help clear up questions and problems when dealing with creditors and other financial institutions.

SOURCE: Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.'s Web site, www.fdic.gov

more, depending on the number of charges against them.

Rosa Jean Mack, 35, who is in Tarrant County Jail on an unrelated charge, was also arrested.

The three who had not been arrested by late Friday were identified as Deon A. Hawkins, 28; Deandra M. Clark, 34; and Joni Johnson, 20.

The indictments capped an 18-month investigation by the district attorney's economic crimes division, which is charged with deterring white-

collar crimes, including identity theft.

"You don't even have to invest in a ski mask to be a crook anymore," said prosecutor Joe Shannon, who oversees the division and routinely gives seminars on identity theft.

Identity theft — obtaining someone's personal information without his knowledge to commit fraud or theft — is one of the fastest-growing white-collar crimes. Victims often end up with poor credit that takes months, even years, to repair.

Shannon, citing research statistics from the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission, said victims usually don't realize that they have been duped until about 14 months after the crime — when bill collectors begin to call. Then, he said, it takes, on average, 12-18 months and \$800 to repair the problem.

Tonya Harlan, the assistant district attorney who will prosecute the cases involving the people arrested Friday, characterized identity theft as the "crime du jour," saying it's an easy way for criminals to make a living.

"It's safer than having to burglarize a home or rob someone, and they don't have to worry about being shot," she said.

She estimates that the identities of nine people were stolen and used in the latest operation. An additional six people, she said, probably sold their ID cards or driver's licenses to the family.

The group is suspected of writing bad checks for washers, dryers, refrigerators, televisions, clocks, office furniture, jewelry, beds, dressers and vacuum cleaners, among other things.

McIntire began investigating the case in August 2001 after realizing that several people who had been charged with thefts were related. It appeared that the family, he said, was engaging in organized crime.

The cases were eventually presented to a grand jury, and authorities set out Friday to round up the suspects, running simultaneous raids on three Fort Worth homes.

By 8:20 a.m., four suspects were in custody.

"I ain't even brushed my teeth yet," Jessie Island Johnson said as she was led away in handcuffs from her home in the 300 block of Chateau Drive, which is where her son, Charles Willie Johnson, was found hiding under the bed.

By 10 a.m., five more suspects had been arrested at their jobs, homes and, in one case, at a halfway house. Another turned herself in late Friday afternoon.

After the morning arrests, authorities began searching three of the homes. McIntire said authorities recovered identifications, phony checks and checkbooks at two of the three homes. At the home on Chateau, authorities also recovered three weapons, including a sawed-off shotgun.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the searches, however, was the amount of furniture, knickknacks — some with price tags still on them — and wall hangings in the homes.

"That living room, you can't even move in it," said investigator Mike Adair, who was at the home on Chateau. "It's like a showroom in a furniture store."

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Tarrant may share county jail in Denton

COOPERATION Denton and Tarrant

County officials are considering a proposal to share a jail, but they still face many hurdles involving finances and staffing.

By **MARK THOMPSON**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Officials from Denton and Tarrant counties are discussing plans to share a vacant 471-bed jail in Denton.

Denton County has a nearly finished jail that has remained vacant since it was built in 1999 because it does not want to spend the money to complete, staff and operate the facility, Denton County Sheriff Weldon Lucas said.

And Tarrant County has an aging jail with too many prisoners and the potential for crowding during an upcoming refurbishing project, Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

Officials have been discussing whether to have Tarrant County staff the Denton County facility. The jail would then house inmates from both counties, Anderson said. Although the two sides have discussed the project for about six months, they are not close to agreeing on the details.

Who would pay for what is the major complication, Anderson said.

"We would not come up with a bunch of money. We would come up with the staffing," he said.

By not using the jail, Denton County is losing potential revenue from housing out-of-county inmates. But some county officials are reluctant to spend the money to open the facility, Lucas said. That cost has not been determined, he said.

Denton County Judge Mary Horn said she, county Commissioner Cynthia White and officials from both sheriff departments discussed the issues on March 11.

There is legitimate interest on both sides. But, Horn also said, "We have a lot of hurdles."

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From The Fort Worth Star-Telegram
April 1, 2003

Susan McDonald
1961 - 2003

Susan McDonald, 41, a bank officer for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, died Monday, March 31, 2003, at an Arlington hospital.

Funeral: 2 p.m. Saturday at Blessing Funeral Home, Mansfield.
Visitation: 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at Blessing Funeral Home.

Mrs. McDonald was born April 9, 1961, in Fort Worth, the daughter of Cleta Irene and Cecil Olen Cooney, Sr. She married Raymond James McDonald on May 21, 1999, in Mansfield. She was a member of First Baptist Church of Venus.

Our Susan survived breast cancer and fought a long and courageous battle from heart damage caused by the cure. She was strong until the very end. She passed cancer free and will be dearly missed by family and friends.

Survivors: Husband, Ray McDonald of Mansfield; daughter, Samantha McDonald of Mansfield; parents, Cleta and Cecil Cooney, Sr. of Fort Worth; brothers Cecil Cooney, Jr., of Fort Worth, Jimmy Cooney of Fort Worth and Richard Cooney of Abilene; sisters, Kathy Simmons of Peaster, and Laura Whitley of Saginaw; and father-in-law and mother-in-law, Robert and Ann McDonald of Mansfield; brothers-in-law Robert McDonald and wife, Betsy, of Arlington, and Randy McDonald and wife, Darla, of Cutoff, Louisiana; as well as several nieces and nephews.

Blessing Funeral Home
Mansfield, Texas

Sunday, April 6, 2003 | Star-Telegram

A favorite officer

I write this with a very sad heart, having read of the death of Fort Worth police officer Andre Armani. (See March 25 news story, "Traffic accidents take 7 lives in North Texas on weekend.")

I became acquainted with Armani before my retirement when I worked for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department. He was a very tall, handsome young man who was especially pleasant to all of the county officers who relieved him of his prisoners at the jail.

He was certainly among our favorite Fort Worth police officers. He will, I'm positive, be a "favorite" in heaven!

Peggy Taylor, Fort Worth

Article 4 of 11; 1810 words

Published on March 26, 2003, Page 11, Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TX)

Obituaries

Source: Star-Telegram

Andre Armani FORT WORTH -- Andre Armani, 38, a husband, father, friend and loved by all who knew him, passed away after a tragic accident, Sunday, March 23, 2003. Funeral: 9:30 a.m. Friday at First Baptist Church in Crowley. Burial: Friday at D/FW National Cemetery, Dallas. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Greenwood Funeral Home. Memorials: In lieu of flowers donations may be made in the name of Andre Armani at Fort Worth City Credit Union.

Dolores Springer



SAGINAW — Dolores Springer, 62, a beloved wife, mother and grandmother, died Sunday, April 13, 2003, after a 10-month battle with cancer.

Funeral: 2 p.m. Tuesday at First Baptist Church of Saginaw, 300 North Old Decatur Rd. Burial: Saginaw Cemetery.

Dolores was born April 24, 1940, in Vanderbilt to Jo and Jim Whitfield. She married Don Rodgers in 1956 and they had two children. Dolores married Gene Springer in February 1976, and they joined their two families. She retired from the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office in 1998.

Dolores was preceded in death by her mother, Jo Towler, on Jan. 15, 2002.

Survivors: Husband, Gene Springer of Saginaw; children, Debbie Parks and husband, Randy, of Bedford, Wesley Rodgers and wife, Trenda, of Killeen, Robby Springer and wife, Sara, of Fort Worth and Tammy Ferraccio and husband, Ray, of Saginaw; fathers, Jim Whitfield of Lake Worth and Bob Towler of Breckenridge; brothers, Jerry Whitfield and wife, Karen, of Tioga, Jimmy Mayers and wife, Ginger, of Fort Worth and Jimmy Whitfield of Victoria; sister, Shelia Hawkins of Ennis; grandchildren, Amanda Parks, Kessley and Kaitlyn Rodgers, Megan and Bailey Springer, Matt and Shelby Ferraccio; best friend, Jimmie Carter of Mansfield; numerous nieces and nephews; and countless friends.

Biggers Funeral Home

7139 Jacksboro Hwy., (817) 237-3341

Contract changes management of famed jail commissary

By NEIL STRASSMAN
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County's jail commissary changed hands Tuesday when county officials awarded the contract for operating the storied "banana wagon" to Mid-America Services.

The new contract would give Tarrant County about 10 times more income from the sale of candy bars, toothpaste and other items than it received last year, county officials said.

"We will have the best jail commissary contract in the state," said Sheriff Dee Anderson, who made the decision to

JAIL Tarrant County awards its jail commissary contract to a new company owned by a food service provider who used to operate it.

award the contract to the Dallas-based Mid-America over four competitors, including the current operator, Mid-States Services.

The contract calls for the county to receive a guaranteed annual amount of at least \$750,000 or 27.5 percent of sales, depending on which is higher. Until now, the commissary operator paid the county \$2 a

month for each inmate, based on the average monthly jail census.

Mid-States, the other finalist for the contract, bid a guaranteed minimum of \$728,000 or 26.5 percent of sales.

All expenditures from the money raised must benefit inmates and is often spent on items such as law books, basketballs and TV sets.

The revenues for fiscal year 2002 were \$73,321, which means the guaranteed amount that goes to the county jumps from \$2 to about \$19.55 per prisoner, said Commissioner Glen Whitley.

Mid-America Services is owned by Jack Madera, who recently won bids to operate the Dallas and Denton county commissaries from the company he used to own, Mid-States, which he sold in 1999.

"I'm very glad to serve Tarrant County again," Madera said. "We look forward to supplying the inmates and staff with good quality products."

After Madera's noncompete clause with Mid-States expired in March, he quickly sought to get back into the jail commissary and food service business.

John Sammons, Mid-States' chief executive officer, said, "I've been troubled since Mr. Madera went back in business against us. Sheriff Jim Bowles in Dallas gave him the opportunity. Obviously I'm disappointed."

Questions were raised about a contract awarded in Dallas County to Mid-America in July, despite higher profit guarantees by competing companies, including Mid-States.

In Dallas, a five-year contract awarded by Bowles to Mid-America was branded by county officials as a bad business deal. At the time, the contract was expected to generate about \$4 million a year, with \$600,000 a year going to the Sheriff's Department. Two of the unsuccessful bidders, Swanson Services Corp. and Mid-States, said they had offered to give the Sheriff's Department at least \$1.2 million a year.

A Dallas sheriff's spokesman countered that the contract was awarded based on merit, although it would not generate the most funds.

Under Texas law, a county sheriff has exclusive authority to award the contract to run the commissary and manage the commissary fund.

But Tarrant County, after struggling for several years with former Sheriff David Williams and his commissary fund excesses, two years ago successfully urged the Legislature to adopt a special law that requires

commissioners court approval of any sheriff's commissary contract and expenditures from the fund.

Whitley attached several amendments to the sheriff's contract, including provisions that require the district attorney to approve it, monetary disbursements to Mid-America from the auditor's office, and approval from the sheriff and Commissioners Court for any price increases or the use of inmate labor.

"While we're very pleased with you, Dee, there's no guarantee we won't get another nut as sheriff," Whitley said when he proposed the amendments.

The "banana wagon" began in 1961 when Lon Evans, freshly sworn in as Tarrant County sheriff, launched the operation as a personal business. Evans walked the halls of the jail, selling soap, shaving cream and snacks to prisoners from banana boxes.

Friday, May 2, 2003

Man sentenced to life charged in jailer's assault

By MELODY McDONALD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Saying he has nothing to lose, a Tarrant County Jail inmate recently sentenced to life in prison for raping, beating and stabbing a 14-year-old girl is accused of beating a jailer last week and threatening to harm more, officials said.

Gregory Charles Reed, 21, has been charged with assaulting a public servant stemming from the April 22 attack. The corrections officer, whose name was not released, was struck in the face and taken to a local hospital for stitches, officials said.

Last month, after hearing three days of testimony, state District Judge Everett Young convicted Reed of aggravated sexual assault of a child under 17 with a deadly weapon, fondling and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon to cause serious bodily injury.

The judge handed Reed the maximum sentence: life on the first conviction and 20 years each on the other two. The sentences will run concurrently.

A week after his bench trial, Reed, who was taken back to the Tarrant County Jail to await transfer to prison, assaulted the guard, officials said.

Sgt. Stormy Farmer of the Criminal Investigations Division of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, said the trouble began after another inmate smeared feces on the wall of his cell, requiring trustees to clean up the mess.

Some of the water that rinsed out the feces leaked into other inmates' cells, including Reed's, Farmer said. Reed became upset because he didn't like the smell and wanted out of his cell, she said.

COURTS A Tarrant County Jail inmate recently sentenced to life in prison has been charged with assault on a public servant after authorities said he struck a jailer.



REED

When the corrections officer, who was supervising the trusties, refused to let Reed out for safety reasons, Reed grabbed his cell door to prevent the officer from shutting it. Reed allegedly struck the officer with a closed fist, knocking him down, and continued to hit him while he was down, officials said.

According to an official reading from an offense report, Reed stated that "he had nothing to lose because of the cases against him. He just wanted to take as many jailers with him as he could."

Young has since ordered that Reed remain in the Tarrant County Jail while the assault case is pending, according to officials and computer records. Reed also has three pending family violence assault cases, stemming from

allegations of attacks on his now ex-wife.

Prosecutor Miles Brissette, who tried Reed with lawyer Tracy Kapsidelis, characterized Reed as very dangerous.

Reed was convicted of raping a 14-year-old girl, stabbing her three times and choking her with an electrical cord. The girl survived the Dec. 11, 2001, attack, however, and managed to call 911. Before she was rushed to the hospital and into surgery, she told paramedics that her attacker was named Greg.

Through interviews and computer searches, Detective Corey Ulmer, who now works with a Washington state police department, identified a possible suspect — then 19-year-old Gregory Reed — whom the girl subsequently picked out of a photo lineup, according to court testimony. Investigators tracked Reed to his mother's Fort Worth home, where he was arrested.

Police have said that the girl met Reed at her Woodhaven apartment complex through friends and let him in when he showed up at her apartment about 7:30 p.m.

"She was feeling sick at the time and she asked him to leave," Brissette said. "He punched her and, from there, the tragic events happened. It's amazing this girl made it."


Authorities found an extension cord from a nearby clock radio that had been cut and was apparently used to choke the girl. Investigators said it also appeared that the attacker took a 10-inch knife from a kitchen butcher block and stabbed the girl three times.

During the trial, Reed, who was represented by attorney Tim Moore, testified that Reed and the girl had consensual sex and that he attacked the girl in self-defense after she pulled a knife on him.

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mjmcDonald@star-telegram.com

Samuel B. "Bud" Hunter



 **NORTH RICHLAND HILLS** — Samuel B. "Bud" Hunter, 80, a loving father, grandfather, great-grandfather and brother, passed away Saturday, May 10, 2003, in North Richland Hills.

Funeral: 10 a.m. Wednesday in Bluebonnet Hills Memorial Chapel with the Rev. Jonathan Atwell officiating. Burial: Bluebonnet Hills Memorial Park. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the funeral home.

Memorials: Those desiring may make contributions in Sam's name to the Arthritis Foundation, 3001 W. Fifth St., Fort Worth, Texas 76107.

Sam, known by close friends as "Bud," was a Fort Worth native who attended North Side High School. After graduation, he joined the U.S. Army Air Forces to serve his country during World War II and was honorably discharged in 1946. Shortly thereafter, he met Martha Ann Skidmore on a blind date that was arranged through a mutual friend. After dating for a short time, he asked her to be his wife and they were married July 12, 1947. They spent 54 happy years together.

Sam's career endeavors included a brief employment with the FBI as a fingerprint technician, followed by a lengthy career with the U.S. Postal Service. Upon retirement, he pursued a second career with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office and retired a second time after 11 years of dedicated service.

Among Sam's many interests were flower gardening, fishing, rock hounding, jewelry crafting and spending time with his family.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Martha Ann.

Survivors: Children, Anne Brown of North Richland Hills, Paul Hunter and wife, Sandra, of Fort Worth, Patty Dark and husband, Darrell, of North Richland Hills, Melinda Cole and husband, Kenneth, of Watauga and Charles Hunter and wife, Stephanie, of Hurst; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and a brother, J.P. Hunter of Fort Worth.

Bluebonnet Hills Funeral Home
Colleyville, (817) 498-5894

Jail's planned reopening spurs creation of jobs

By NEIL STRASSMAN
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Tarrant County commissioners agreed to add 61 jailers to Sheriff Dee Anderson's staff Tuesday in anticipation of reopening the minimum-security Cold Springs correctional facility north of downtown Fort Worth.

But before reopening the jail, the county must complete an upgrade of equipment used to remove smoke from the building in case of fire so that the jail can pass a state safety inspection.

That work is expected to be

JAILS

Tarrant County officials approve 61 additional jailers as upgrades are made to the Cold Springs minimum-security facility for its reopening.

completed within a month and the Cold Springs jail should open soon after, county officials said.

"The sooner the better," Commissioner J.D. Johnson said.

The 384 beds at Cold Springs are needed now because the county's three jails

will soon run out of room. In addition, prisoners must be transferred from the top three floors of the Thomas R. Windham Building at 350 W. Belknap St. so that the building can be repaired.

"We sorely need the space," Anderson said.

As of May 20, the county had 3,422 prisoners, with bunks for about 3,660, said Chief Deputy Bob Knowles, in charge of jail operations.

State law requires that some groups of prisoners be housed separately, so the county must maintain an excess capacity of

about 5 percent to 10 percent. The current bed-to-prisoner ratio does not give enough flexibility.

The Cold Springs unit was closed in 1995 and refurbished four years later at a cost of \$1.6 million. The county's Community Supervision and Corrections Department, which administers probation programs, used the facility for offices until April, when the remodeling project began.

Once the Cold Springs facility opens, nonviolent inmates serving shorter sentences will

be transferred there along with prisoners serving time on weekends, making room in the other jails for high-risk prisoners who need to be moved out of the Belknap facility.

The county can then begin a planned \$1.9 million renovation of the Belknap lock-up, which needs a revamped air-conditioning system, better smoke removal equipment and modern elevators.

For months last summer, the air conditioners did not work properly. Huge water-cooler fans and box fans were set up in halls and cell-

blocks to cool the jail, parts of which the county leases from Fort Worth. Jailers complained of dizziness and nausea, but the temperature never exceeded the 85-degree maximum the state allows in county jails.

The county is about to begin building a new facility with about 1,100 beds at the Green Bay jail unit, southwest of Loop 820 and Interstate 35W, paid for by \$14.6 million approved by voters in a 1998 bond package.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657
strass@star-telegram.com

Don Stutts



NORTH RICHLAND HILLS — Don Stutts, 69, passed away Wednesday, May 21, 2003, in Fort Worth.

Funeral: 3:30 p.m. Saturday in Greenwood Chapel. Burial: Bluebonnet Hills Memorial Park, Colleyville. Visitation: 7 to 9 p.m. Friday at Greenwood Funeral Home.

Memorials: The family suggests donations be made to Baylor All Saints VITAS Hospice.

Mr. Stutts was born March 12, 1934, in Huntsville. He was a retired Fort Worth police officer for 28 years and a retired Tarrant County sheriff's deputy for nine years. He was also a veteran of the Korean War.

Survivors: Wife, Judy Stutts; children, Celeste Callahan and husband, Paul, Doland Lamar Stutts Jr. and Donna Stutts McCauley; grandchildren, Megan Stutts, Taylor Hillian, Doland Lamar Stutts III, Paul E. Callahan, Lindsey McCauley, Logan McCauley and Casey Callahan; sister, Shirley Cofer; and extended family, Cecil and Marianna Sandstrom, Laura Stutts Miller, Rex and Cindy Bell, Tex and Judy Bell, Christi Tawater, Lori Cochran and Pat Stutts.

Greenwood Funeral Home
3100 White Settlement Road, (817) 336-0584

Billy Gene Broome



FORT WORTH — Billy Gene Broome, 74, a retired jail administrator, passed away Saturday, May 24, 2003, at a local hospital.

Funeral: 11:30 a.m. Thursday at Shannon Rose Hill Funeral Chapel. Burial: Shannon Rose Hill Memorial Park. Visitation: open.

Memorials: The Humane Society of North Texas, 1840 E. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth, Texas 76103.

Bill served our country in the Army. He graduated from Sam Houston University with a master's degree. He lived in Houston for 12 years and worked at the jail before moving to Fort Worth and working at the Tarrant County jail. He was a volunteer of Blue Patrol and Harris Hospital. Bill enjoyed cooking and playing cards and loved his cat, Bubba.

Survivors: Brothers, Raleigh W. Broome and Jack H. Broome.

Shannon Rose Hill Funeral Chapel
7301 E. Lancaster, (817) 451-3333

For 25 escapees, jail was no place to call home

Fort Worth and Tarrant County's first permanent jail was built in 1884 on Belknap Street behind the courthouse — and almost exactly where



Bill Fairley
TARRANT
CHRONICLES

the original fort had been built by Maj. Ripley Arnold and his dragoons in 1849.

It was a three-story-plus-base-Victorian-style brick building with steel doors and bars and steel plates on its wood floors. A tunnel ran under Belknap Street connecting the basements of the jail and the courthouse so that prisoners could be taken to trial.

Nicknamed "The Bastille" after the infamous French prison, over the years it was the scene of numerous suicides and eight lawful executions. It was stormed at least twice by armed mobs seeking to lynch prisoners, the last time in 1914, when it took three companies of the Texas State Guard to put down the riot. The prisoner

was later legally hanged inside the jail by authorities.

Among its better known inmates were former Town Marshal Jim Courtright (wanted for a killing in New Mexico Territory), Bat Masterson (legendary lawman, gambler and writer), Luke Short (accused of illegal gambling and shootings) and "Deacon" Jim Miller (a hired killer and Methodist church deacon).

The Bastille was a great improvement over earlier wood-frame, makeshift jails from which prisoners could escape by prying boards loose, and authorities hoped that the new structure would be escape-proof.

For 12 years, it was.

But in 1896, inmate Martin McGrath — a convicted mur-

derer, former Fort Worth police officer and one-term city alderman — was not locked in his cell at night because he had been made a

trusty in deference to his earlier public service. One night, McGrath simply walked through the tunnel, up into the courthouse and walked out, never to be found.

"Little is known or recorded about incidents at the jail during most of the 1880s," said Fort Worth police Sgt. Kevin Foster, who has written a police newsletter article about the Bastille.

"But between the years of 1896 and 1915, the jail became a source of real embarrassment to Tarrant County officials. It earned a reputation as being easy to escape from."

In 1901, future police officer Lude Dillard was overpowered and severely beaten by eight prisoners. The escapees ran out the front door of the jail at midday. Four ran through the north doors of the courthouse and mingled with the crowd inside. They then casually walked out of the south doors to freedom.

The other four got pistols and engaged in a wild, running shootout with officers. They surrendered when their ammunition ran out.

In 1902, two more prisoners simply walked out unlocked doors and were never seen again.

In 1904, two men, one with a wooden leg, cut their way out of their cell and tried to jump from an unbarred second-floor window. The wooden leg splintered when its user hit the ground. He tried hopping on the good leg but was quickly captured. His partner was apprehended at the riverbank.

The largest jail break in Tarrant County history occurred in 1905. Nine men cut their way through the third-floor wall of one of the cells. While the jailer slept one night, they tied

blankets together and went hand-over-hand to the ground. Only two were ever captured.

In 1912, a capital murder suspect named Tate was being held for Tyler police. Tate sawed through two bars and

knocked a hole in the third floor ceiling. He got up into the attic and climbed out onto the roof where he secured a fire hose to a girder and lowered himself to the ground. He was never captured.

The last escape was in 1915. A prisoner named Bessie Williams used a spoon to dig the mortar from between bricks in her cell wall. Her freedom was short-lived, however, and after she was captured she did her time in the state prison.

All told, there were 25 escapes from the Bastille and, after 34 years, county commissioners had had enough.

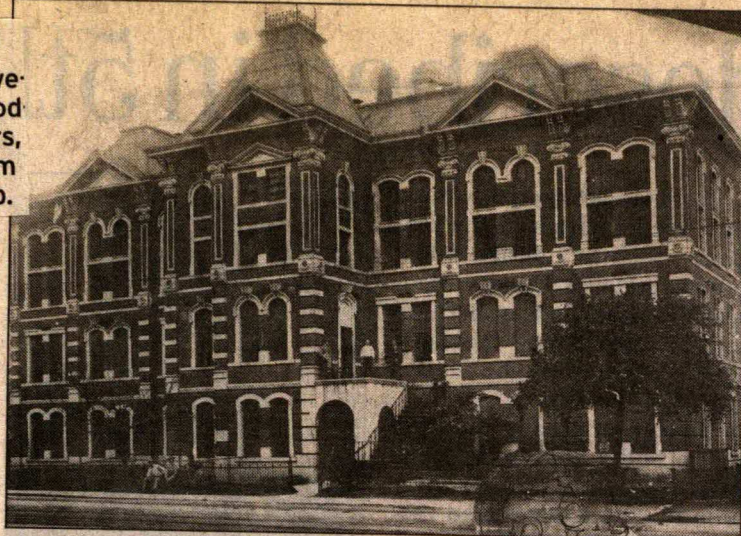
The next jail was constructed on the corner of Houston and West Belknap Streets, which today is the main headquarters of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department. A newer jail is a half-block west on Belknap, which is also the downtown headquarters of the Fort Worth Police Department.

Sources: Fort Worth police Sgt. Kevin Foster who, with author-historian Richard F. Selcer, is working on a book about Fort Worth law enforcement.

Bill Fairley is a longtime Fort Worth resident interested in Texas history.
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FAIRLEY

"The Bastille" was an improvement over the earlier, wood frame jails, but in 34 years, 25 prisoners escaped from the Tarrant County lockup.



STAR-TELEGRAM ARCHIVES

A photograph of Fort Worth and Tarrant County's first permanent jail, a Victorian-style, brick structure located north of the old Tarrant County Courthouse.

Wednesday, June 11, 2003

Sheriff vows crackdown against drunken drivers

By **NEIL STRASSMAN**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County officials Tuesday stepped up their effort to target drunken drivers by pledging to put more deputies on DWI patrol during the July Fourth and Christmas holidays.

At Sheriff Dee Anderson's request, the county commissioners approved a \$50,000 grant from the Texas Department of Transportation that will cover the cost of the additional enforcement.

"We will have a number of extra deputies on the street to focus on DWI enforcement and prevention," Anderson said. "We will have saturation patrols."

The enhanced patrols will work from June 27 through July 13, and from Dec. 19 through Jan. 4, Anderson said. They will focus on unincorporated areas where the highest number of arrests have been made in the past for driving while under the influence of alcohol, he said.

"The deputies know the places where the problems are," Anderson said.

The deputies will also work to keep inebriated people from driving, Anderson said.

"Enforcement is important, but so is prevention," he said.

The deputies will check out bars and try to discourage underage drinking at parties, he said.

"It's great that we're going to have more cops out there on these dangerous holidays," said Bill Lewis, legislative director for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The summer-time holidays are often when the most alcohol-related accidents occur, he said.

The consumption of alcohol is a factor in about half of the traffic fatalities in Texas, compared with about a 38 percent average in other states, Lewis said.

"We kill a lot more people in Texas with alcohol," he said. "We applaud the sheriff for applying for the grant."

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657
strass@star-telegram.com

CHRONICLES OF LAWMEN

Sheriff history project under way

By **PAUL BOURGEOIS**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The Tarrant County Sheriff's Department has been at the center of a lot of history in 153 years, but little of it has been written down or compiled.

The department hopes to correct that with a history recounting the exploits and achievements of the county's sheriffs and deputies, whose activities often parallel some of the more colorful events in Fort Worth and Tarrant County history.

The plan is to publish a hard-back book with photos of all 34 sheriffs, personal stories, rosters and photos of personnel past and present and a memorial to fallen deputies.

The book would be available to the public.

It's not just a matter of going through the files, said Chief Deputy Hank Pope, a self-professed "history nut" who has taken on the task.

Pope said that criminal and case records were maintained but that most outgoing sheriffs took with them other papers, photographs, old uniforms, badges and whatever else wasn't nailed down.

Pope said he has found some items and information, but not enough.

He said he hopes that area residents might share information and artifacts left behind by family members or friends who were members of the department.

The items would be copied or photographed and returned to the owners. Anything might be of value in compiling the history. Pope can be reached at (817) 884-1304.

So far, he's found some interesting stories.

Among the more colorful sheriffs was William M. Rea, whose career as a lawman spanned almost 50 years. Rea started as a patrol officer under Longhair Jim Courtwright, the city marshal from 1876-1879.

Courtwright had been an Army scout and a performer in Wild Bill Hickok's Wild West Show, and he was one of the fastest draws in the West. He was shot to death by Luke Short at the White Elephant Saloon on Feb. 8, 1886.

Rea went on to be Fort Worth city marshal from 1883-87 and was police chief from 1897-1905. He was elected Tarrant County sheriff 1910-14. He stayed on at the department into the 1920s.

Pope said Reconstruction, 1867-77, was a difficult time for the department.

"Sheriffs would be elected, and then the carpetbaggers would throw them out," Pope said.

M.T. Morgan and Sanders Elliott each lasted only 10 months as sheriff in the mid-to-late 1860s. Charles L.

Loucks was sheriff for about seven months.

J.T. Furnish had the shortest term in office.

Military governor Gen. J.J. Reynolds saw to it that Furnish was gone before he arrived in 1870. Reynolds appointed Thomas B. James sheriff before Furnish could take office.

Lon Evans was in office the longest, 24 years, 1961-85. Evans also had the distinction of having been an all-pro with the Green Bay Packers in 1936-37.

E.A. Euliss, sheriff from 1892-96, lent his name to the city of Eules, although no one can explain the spelling difference, Pope said.

Two sheriffs died in office: Tom J. Wood, 1906-09, died of natural causes. John B. York was killed in the line of duty in 1860.

In one account, York had shoved prominent lawyer A.Y. Fowler into a mud puddle when he barged to the front of a line of people waiting for water from a spring north of town during a drought.

The story goes that Fowler hid out in the office of lawyer John Peter Smith waiting for York to make his rounds.

Fowler jumped York and stabbed him 27 times. As he was dying, York fired off a shot, killing the fleeing Fowler.

In another version, York had roused the drunken Fowler at a barbecue. Fowler supposedly went to the sheriff's office the next day and jumped him with a bowie knife. Although stabbed 13 times, the sheriff drew his pistol and killed Fowler. The sheriff was then killed by a shotgun blast from Bill Fowler, A.Y.'s brother.

In another account, York and Fowler killed each other in a gunfight just west of where the courthouse now stands. The gunfight followed a squabble over whether Fort Worth should replace Birdville as the county seat. York favored Fort Worth. Fowler wanted it to stay in Birdville, where it had been since 1849.

York was one of three sheriffs who had split terms. The others were S.P. Clark and Carl Smith.

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HISTORY The Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, hoping to document its history, is looking for pictures, memorabilia and anything else that might help.

Terms of office

The sheriffs and their terms in office are as follows:

- Francis Jourdan, 1850-52.
- John B. York, 1852-56.
- William B. Tucker, 1856-58.
- John B. York, 1858-60.
- William O. Yantes, 1860-62.
- John W. Gillespie, 1862-64.
- James P. Davis, 1864-65.
- B.F. Arthur, 1865-67.
- M.T. Morgan, 1867-68.
- Sanders Elliott, 1868-69.
- Charles L. Loucks, 1869-70.
- J.T. Furnish, 1870.
- Thomas B. James, 1869-76.
- J.M. Henderson, 1876-80.
- Walter T. Maddox, 1880-86.
- B.H. Shipp, 1886-88.
- J.C. Richardson, 1888-92.
- E.A. Euliss, 1892-96.
- S. P. Clark, 1896-1902.
- John T. Honea, 1902-06.
- Tom J. Wood, 1906-09.
- O.M. Sweet, 1909-10.
- William M. Rea, 1910-14.
- N.C. Mann, 1914-18.
- S. P. Clark, 1918-20.
- Carl Smith, 1920-29.
- J.R. Wright, 1929-33.
- C.D. Little, 1933-35.
- Carl Smith, 1935-36.
- Arthur B. Carter, 1936-43.
- Dusty Rhodes, 1943-47.
- J.R. "Sully" Montgomery, 1947-53.
- Harlan Wright, 1953-61.
- Lon Evans, 1961-85.
- Don Carpenter, 1985-92.
- David Williams, 1993-2000.
- Dee Anderson, 2001-present.

Sheriff targets 8-liner

June 13, 2003 | Star-Telegram

gambling

By PEYTON D. WOODSON
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The Tarrant County sheriff says his staff will begin hand-delivering letters today to about 70 eight-liner gaming parlors, telling the operators that they have 14 days to shut down the illegal machines.

In April, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that eight-liners that give cash or store certificates are illegal gambling devices, but many owners resisted the decision, saying they should be exempt because a portion of their profits was donated to charity.

Eight-liner proponents had hoped the Legislature would revise the law in their favor, but lawmakers adjourned without doing so.

"The Supreme Court very clearly addresses this issue and says that the [charitable] exemption isn't for eight-liner machines," Sheriff Dee Anderson said Thursday.

"We're hoping for voluntary compliance on this. We've talked to a lot of owners that say if the court considers this illegal, they'll shut them down."

Eight-liners are similar to slot machines in that players win prizes if three icons match vertically, horizontally or diagonally. The state's high court unanimously ruled that the machines are illegal gaming devices if their operators reward winners with cash or credit to continue playing.

Sheriff's officers will deliver warning letters in unincorporated parts of

the county along Texas 199 north of Lake Worth and in the southern part of the county, Anderson said.

In addition to being illegal, eight-liners attract criminals, Anderson said.

"We've had some armed robberies occur," he said. "A lot of them are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Still, some organizations say contributions from eight-liner parlors make a significant difference to them. For example, since January, the Eagle Mountain Lake Volunteer Fire Department has received \$18,000 from three gaming parlors that operate eight-liners in the sheriff's tar-

geted area, Fire Chief Mike Barton said.

"It's a big shot in the arm for volunteer departments," Barton said. "It keeps our heads above water. It helps us purchase big-ticket items we can't spend our [budget] money on. It helps improve our operations out here."

Rita Jackel, manager of Big Daddy's gaming parlor off U.S. 377, also lamented the sheriff's decision.

"We donate quite a bit to charity," she said. "They're going to be hurting a lot of people. I wish people would go to the charities and see how much it helps them."

Jackel and others say the eight-liner parlors provide cheap, benign entertainment for families and retired people.

"The ones I visit are played by good people that are having

fun," Barton said. "It doesn't seem like you're walking into a Vegas place. It seems like there ought to be a way to keep them operating — especially if it's donating to a legitimate charity."

Some eight-liner parlors, such as Becki's Game Room on Crowley Road, are operated solely for profit. Troy Baccus said he had owned the parlor for six years but knew it would eventually be closed.

"It's been a very lucrative business," Baccus said. "It was just one of those things we accidentally got into."

"I'm not sure gambling is all that bad of a deal, but I'm not sure this is the way it should be done. They're all set up differently. It's just a big mess."

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GAMBLING

Officers will enforce a Texas Supreme Court ruling that outlaws eight-liners that give cash prizes.

OBITUARIES

Sunday, July 13, 2003 | Star-Telegram

Jesse Earl Jones



CLEBURNE — Jesse Earl Jones, 80, a retired jailer, died Sunday, July 6, 2003, at a Cleburne care center.

Memorial service: Will be held at a later date in Rose Hill Cemetery, Cleburne.

Jesse Earl Jones was born in Rogers April 15, 1923. He was a retired jailer for Tarrant County.

Survivors: Son, Richard Watley; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Crosier-Pearson-Mayfield Funeral Home
Cleburne, (817) 645-4311

Tuesday, July 15, 2003 | Star-Telegram

R.L. "Bob" Smith



AZLE — R.L. "Bob" Smith, 80, a warrant officer for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department who retired in 1999, died Sunday, July 13, 2003, at a Fort Worth hospital.

Funeral: 9:30 a.m. Wednesday in Biggers Funeral Chapel. Burial: Azleland Memorial Park. The family suggests that all who attend wear Western attire.

Mr. Smith served on the USS Curtis during World War II and was a professional horse trainer and judge.

Survivors: Wife, Mable G. Smith of Azle; son, Gary L. Smith of Saginaw; daughter, Brenda K. Emmert of Boyd; grandchildren, Christopher W. and Jennifer Smith, Mason, Brooks and Katy Tompkins; and great-grandchildren, Austin Smith and Nicholas Tompkins.

Biggers Funeral Home
7139 Jacksboro Hwy., (817) 237-3341

Cheers & Jeers

Cheers: To the female officer with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, the male nurse and the others who helped me at 4:20 p.m. June 23 when my motorcycle was involved in an accident on Western Center Boulevard.

A.M. "Andy" Ivey, Watauga

Saturday, July 26, 2003

Security lapses concern judges

By **MELODY McDONALD**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Courthouse safety was called into question earlier this month when two security breaches at the downtown Tarrant County Justice Center unnerved even some of the most seasoned judges.

On July 18, just four days after a Tarrant County Jail inmate smuggled a razor blade into a courthouse holding cell and cut his wrists, sheriff's

COURTS An inmate conceals razor blades in his jumpsuit, and a defendant's family is allowed to ride in a private elevator with a judge.

deputies strip-searched the defendant before he was again taken to the courthouse, and found two more razor blades taped to his groin area.

That incident occurred just one day after a maintenance worker

allowed another defendant's family to board a private elevator with a judge and ride up to a fifth-floor courtroom — highlighting a problem that, judges and other officials say, needs to be corrected before someone who has a weapon or plans to harm an elected official bypasses security and gets on that elevator.

"I think it was just a freak week," said Sheriff's Department Lt. Randall Bannister, who oversees security in

Tarrant County courthouses but is not responsible for monitoring the private elevator. "Our security right now is probably at the highest it can be. We are doing everything we can to make sure things don't happen."

And though many of the judges who preside over justice center courtrooms agree that security is tight, they also concede that it's far from perfect, especially in light of the shooting

More on COURTS on 8B

COURTS

Continued from 1B

death Wednesday in New York's City Hall of a councilman by a political opponent. The opponent got his gun into City Hall by accompanying the councilman, who did not have to pass through metal detectors.

And many remember the infamous July 1992 killing spree in Tarrant County, when George Lott of Arlington smuggled a gun into the 2nd Court of Appeals and opened fire to avenge the handling of a bitter child custody case. A Tarrant County prosecutor and a Dallas lawyer were killed, and two judges and another prosecutor were wounded. Lott has since been executed for his crimes.

Several officials said that last week's local incidents underscore the need to make some changes, including searching inmates more thoroughly before they are taken through the underground tunnel into the courthouse and further restricting access to the elected officials' private elevator and garage.

Those officials can come and go without going through security checks.

"I think in today's society, we should take extra care in our security around the courthouse to protect ourselves and the jurors," said visiting state District Judge C.C. "Kit" Cooke, who presided over the case in which the defendant slashed his wrists. "I don't want my bailiffs or the general public harmed. I think it is something we need to be more aware of right now."

Concealed razor blades

On July 14, Robert Carl McKay was rushed to an area hospital and his aggravated robbery trial was postponed after he cut his wrists in a courthouse holding cell with a razor blade he had concealed in his jail jumpsuit.

When deputies went to the jail to get McKay for his trial on July 18, they strip-searched him and found two more razor

blades.

Authorities prevented McKay from hurting himself or someone else that day, but courthouse officials were alarmed that McKay could obtain razor blades in jail and hide them on his body — not once, but twice within a matter of days.

Sheriff Dee Anderson, whose department runs the jail and manages courthouse security, said that inmates do not pass through metal detectors and that sheriff's deputies need to be diligent when they search inmates entering and leaving the jail.

"A metal detector wouldn't detect a sliver of a razor blade, but we should be doing a better job than a metal detector," Anderson said.

For hygiene reasons, he said, the jail is required by law to provide safety razors to inmates, who can buy them from the commissary. He acknowledged that inmates sometimes manage to remove a blade, but for the most part, the razors have not been too problematic and he has no plans to change the policy on how they are distributed.

"The safety razors don't pose a huge threat, and it's almost impossible to harm another person with one," Anderson said. "We try to be diligent in searching everyone that comes and goes. Obviously, he had one hidden away."

"We found it before he got back over there. But the question is, how did he obtain the second one? That is under investigation and we are looking into that."

An unauthorized ride

While Judge Cooke was dealing with the razor blade issue on July 18, state District Judge Sharen Wilson was disturbed about an unrelated security breach that occurred the day before.

During final arguments in an aggravated robbery trial, she learned that a maintenance worker had let several of the defendant's relatives ride the judges' private elevator. State District Judge Everett Young got on that elevator.

"They said they were wait-

"I don't want my bailiffs or the general public harmed. I think it is something we need to be more aware of right now."

— visiting state District Judge C.C. "Kit" Cooke

ing for an elevator and worrying out loud about needing to be in court in time for arguments," Wilson said. "This woman offered to help them get up to court in time."

Wilson said she later learned from Young that the maintenance worker took the group into the judges' private garage and allowed them to board the private elevator there.

Judy Miller, court reporter for Criminal District Court No. 3, said she was on the private elevator when the group got on.

"They filed into the elevator and filled it up," Miller said. "I thought it was strange and saw the maintenance worker had a county badge and thought she has authority to do it. Just before it shut, Judge Young slipped on."

The maintenance worker has received verbal and written reprimands, and her access card to the private elevator has been revoked, said Gary Kirby, director of facilities management for the county.

Restricting access to elected officials' private elevator — and their private parking garage — is a security issue that Tarrant County officials have been discussing for some time now.

State District Judge George Gallagher has researched the situation and said 44 officials, most of them judges, have reserved parking in the garage under the justice center. He believes that only those 44 people should have access cards for the private elevator, which is accessible from the garage without going through security, as well as from each floor of the justice center.

Gallagher said he recently discovered, however, that 587 people had been issued access

cards to the private garage and elevator, including people who have since died, former employees, probation officers and court clerks, among others.

"There are 543 people that don't park in that garage and have access," Gallagher said, adding that he believes that is unacceptable.

Solving the problem, however, is not simple.

The Sheriff's Department is not responsible for monitoring the private elevator or issuing access cards, officials said. The County Commissioners Court, which owns and controls the building, has delegated the task of issuing cards to facilities management.

Kirby said various maintenance people must have access to those areas, but acknowledged that over the years, an unsettling number of people have been granted access — often at judges' requests — and that changes must be made.

He said the Commissioners Court has asked the judges to decide how the access cards should be issued. When they reach a decision, the judges will make a recommendation to the commissioners, who will set the policy.

Judge Gallagher said some judges agree with him that only 44 people should have access to the private garage and elevator, while others believe that each judge should get one access card plus three more to distribute as they see fit.

Judges voted 7-7 on the issue last month. Another vote is expected next month.

Officials said the incident involving the defendant's family riding the private elevator illustrates the problem. Though it was an honest mistake by the defendant's relatives, who earlier had been through the metal detectors, the potential for disaster exists, authorities said.

"It's something you don't think much about until it happens and, since it did, let's understand that this is not the way we operate," Kirby said. "It will not happen again."

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Thursday, July 31, 2003

Drug dog Kilo dies at age 14

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — In his younger days, Kilo's nose got a lot of people in trouble.

In seven years with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, Kilo "seized about \$2.5 million in cash, about a thousand pounds of marijuana, 50 pounds of methamphetamine and 75 to 80 pounds of cocaine," Sgt. Alan Dennis said Wednesday.

One time, Kilo sniffed out \$97,000 in cash along with some drugs, Dennis said.

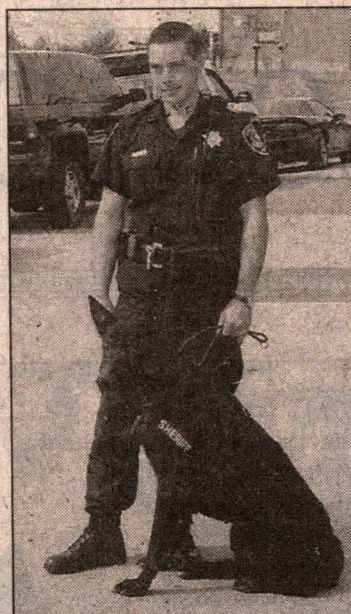
Kilo, a black Belgian Malinois, was trained to detect methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and marijuana. "He was extremely proficient at it," Dennis said. "He was one of the best narcotics dogs that I've seen."

Kilo retired last year when symptoms of advancing age, including hip dysplasia, slowed him down.

On July 22, at age 14, Kilo died at the Parker County home where he had lived with his partner, Kendall Novak. Kilo was buried there, he said.

Kilo joined the Sheriff's Department in 1995.

He cost \$5,000, and several thousand dollars more were spent to train and maintain him.



TARRANT COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT Kilo, shown with handler Kendall Novak, sniffed out cash and illicit drugs during his seven years' service with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department.

But every time Kilo sniffed out hidden drugs, authorities could also confiscate money and property from the drug traffickers. That revenue is used by the department to help offset the costs of fighting crime, including the care of drug dogs, said Novak, who was a deputy sheriff when he was Kilo's partner.

In September, Novak became an investigator with the Tarrant County district attorney's office.

"Thanks to Kilo, I got a job at DA's office," he said. "He kind of made me famous at the [Sheriff's Department]. I can thank that dog for it."

Kilo's death, Novak said, "is not like losing a child, but a friend."

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August 2003

The Courts

The Courts are among the most important services the County provides. Collectively, Tarrant County's 49 courts dispose of more than 120,000 cases each year. The Tarrant County court system is comprised of eight Justices of the Peace elected from individual precincts, as well as 15 County Courts and 26 District Courts, all elected countywide.

Justices of the Peace

Justices of the Peace serve as the small claims courts for Texas. The Justices also act as notaries public and perform marriages. They hear three different kinds of civil lawsuits—evictions, civil justice (up to a \$5,000 limit) and small claims (also up to a \$5,000 limit). JPs also adjudicate class C misdemeanor criminal cases, which are filed in their courts by the various state and county agencies, i.e., the Department of Public Safety and Sheriff's Department. Approximately 5,500 truancy cases were filed in the JP Courts during the last school year.

County Courts-at-Law

The legislature has the authority to create special county courts, primarily in metropolitan areas. Legal jurisdiction of special county courts varies considerably according to the enabling statute. The three Tarrant County Courts-at-Law have concurrent civil jurisdiction with district courts when the contested amount exceeds \$500, but not more than \$100,000. They also adjudicate non-jury family law cases, workers compensation cases, condemnation cases and suits to decide title to real property, as well as slander and defamation cases.

County Criminal Courts

County Criminal Courts are the criminal justice version of County Courts-at-Law. Judges in these courts have original jurisdiction over Class A and B misdemeanors. Tarrant County's 10 County Criminal Courts deal with such cases as driving-while-intoxicated, worthless checks and possession or sale of drugs. Two have jurisdiction of appeals from justice and municipal courts in criminal matters (Class C misdemeanors). Some of the courts may also handle felony guilty pleas. County Criminal Court #5 is the primary court for family violence cases.

Probate Courts

Tarrant County's two Probate Courts are responsible for probating wills, determining heirship, appointing guardians for the mentally incompetent and rendering decisions concerning the settlement of estates. The courts supervise all matters subsequently involved in the administration of court-supervised cases both for deceased persons and persons under guardianship.

District Courts

District courts are the general trial courts of the state and handle most major litigation. Generally, these courts hear felony cases, divorce proceedings, contested elections and any civil matter not specifically conferred on another court. In urban areas, some district courts specialize in criminal, domestic relations, or juvenile proceedings. There are 26 District Courts in Tarrant County, including four Criminal District Courts, six Family Law Courts and one Juvenile Court. The judge of the 96th District Court has administrative oversight of the Eighth Judicial District.

A statewide survey has shown that nearly 75 percent of the cases in district courts were civil cases and nearly half of those were divorce actions. While high-profile murder cases garner the most attention, the most common criminal cases heard in District Courts involve burglary, theft and drug law violations.

For more information on the sitting judges in Tarrant County, log-on to our website at www.tarrantcounty.com.

Officials OK budget for sheriff

By MAX B. BAKER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson earned a gold star — literally — from county commissioners Friday after amicably agreeing to a \$74.5 million budget for next year.

Commissioners Dionne Bagsby and Marti VanRavenswaay presented

FINANCE Tarrant County commissioners give initial approval to a new budget for the sheriff without the rancor that marked the process during David Williams' tenure.

Anderson the gold star — drawn on a piece of paper — after giving initial approval to the sheriff's budget with-

out the rancor that has marked the process in the past.

During former Sheriff David Williams' eight years in office, commissioners and the sheriff butted heads over Williams' requests for helicopters and other special items as he tried to expand his department's crime-fighting role.

"This is a pleasure to deal with real

facts and real people and not deal with other agendas or even other philosophies," Bagsby said. "He is certainly managing his money and not doing weird stuff."

On Friday, Anderson said he took a conservative approach to next year's budget by concentrating on his department's central role as the county jailer.

while the three commissioners will make \$109,824 each.

County Budget Director Debbie Schneider prepared the financial blueprint after whittling down about \$369 million in budgetary requests that called for 85 new employees.

The proposed budget includes about 30 new employees, mostly for court and criminal justice jobs.

"It is an example of elected officials working well together and being cognizant of their taxpayers and constituents," Bagsby said. "There was give-and-take on both sides."

Williams' relationship with commissioners began to sour soon after he took office in 1992. He eventually sued commissioners over a budget dispute that was later resolved.

Anderson took office in January 2001 and started his tenure by slashing overtime.

As of June, Anderson had spent about \$50,000 in overtime for jailers, records show. Three years ago, Williams — who had dictated that everyone work a six-day week, with an

automatic eight hours of overtime — had paid out about \$646,000, documents indicate.

This year, Anderson renegotiated the contract with the commissary that sells candy bars, toothpaste and other items to jail inmates. The contract guarantees the county at least \$750,000 annually, according to county records.

Before that, the commissary operator paid the county \$2 a month for each inmate, based on the average monthly jail census.

"We all want more people and more stuff," Anderson said. "But we understood the financial constraints the county had."

As a result, commissioners didn't blink when Anderson asked for the authority to hire 61 more jailers after crowding at the downtown jail prompted the reopening of the Cold Springs Jail in July.

In the new budget, Anderson will also be given funds to hire five new officers to reduce the stack of 20,000 undelivered warrants. He also will get three

dispatchers to handle calls for the fire marshal and constables.

In return, Anderson didn't fight a proposal to freeze step raises for one year for deputies and jailers, who will still receive the 3 percent lump-sum increase.

But Anderson said he was promised that commissioners will restore the salary step increases in next year's budget.

During the budget review, commissioners also discussed giving the county's 26 district court judges a raise. The state, which pays most of their \$110,000 to \$112,000 salaries, did not boost their pay this year.

Although a 3 percent raise on the \$9,300 that the county provides toward their salary is in the budget, Commissioner Glen Whitley wants to give them a raise based on their entire salary.

"I think it's ridiculous that they haven't gotten a raise in five years," he said.

"No air force will be taking off from the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department," Anderson said. "Don't look for toys and gadgets. I told my people, 'Let's look for better ways to serve the taxpayers.'"

The sheriff's budget was given preliminary approval as the commissioners wrapped up, in only a day and a half, a review of their proposed \$332.5 million budget for the fiscal year that starts in October.

Commissioners are scheduled to adopt a final budget Sept. 16.

The proposed budget will leave the county's tax rate at 27.25 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation while still paying for a 3 percent raise for most of the county's 4,000 employees, including the commissioners.

If the plan is adopted, County Judge Tom Vandergriff will see his salary jump to \$119,532

Department to use eye scans in keeping track of inmates

By MAX B. BAKER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The Tarrant County Sheriff's Department will become the first law enforcement agency in Texas to use portable eyeball-scanning devices to identify criminals as they enter and leave the local jail.

Sheriff Dee Anderson got about \$48,000 from Tarrant County Commissioners on Tuesday to buy the hand-held devices, which will initially be used to keep track of the jail population but later for other crime-fighting endeavors.

"It's way cool — it's foolproof," Anderson said. "Your eye has an absolutely unique ID. The sky is the limit as far as its application goes."

The scan will not take the place of fingerprints, but it will provide an additional means of identification, officials said.

The equipment uses what is commonly referred to as iris recognition technology. Tarrant County is buying three units twice as large as a standard cellphone. The maker is SecuriMetrics Inc. of Calif.

The iris is the round, colored membrane that surrounds the pupil. Like fingerprints, each iris has a unique pattern and code.

Each unit costs about \$7,000. The county is also spending \$20,000 for a specialized database to store up to 75,000 individually digitized records. The rest of the money is for training and computer configuration.

The county expects to be using the system by the end of October.

"There's never been a false identification through iris technology," said Jeff Nicholson, chief deputy of technolo-

TECHNOLOGY The county pays \$48,000 for equipment to positively identify jail inmates.

"It's way cool — it's foolproof. Your eye has an absolutely unique ID. The sky is the limit as far as its application goes."

— Dee Anderson,
Tarrant County sheriff

gy in the sheriff's department. He also said the scanners are safe and easy for deputies and inmates.

Rick Salazar, a national account manager for SecuriMetrics, said the design of a person's iris goes unchanged from about 18 months old.

"If an inmate is enrolled at 18 years old, and then leaves the area for 20 years and is arrested again, the old record will pop up," Salazar said. Each unit has the ability to search 1.5 million records a minute for a match.

"It adds another layer of authentication," Salazar said.

Anderson started looking into using the James Bond-style technology in January as a way to identify and monitor the 3,500 inmates in the jail, as well as the 2,000 people who serve out sentences on work-release programs.

It costs about \$175 to book an inmate into jail, during which an inmate's photos and fingerprints will be taken, Anderson said. To positively identify an inmate, fingerprints are crosschecked with those on record, if available.

If those records determine

that someone has given an alias, the paperwork must be reworked to reflect the defendant's true identity, the sheriff said.

By using the iris recognition units, deputies will be able to quickly determine whether they are dealing with the right person, Nicholson said. It also can be used to make sure the right person is being released from jail.

"They will go to great lengths to hide their identities," Anderson said. "This way we will know who is coming in the front door of the jail and who is going out the back door."

In other business, commissioners tentatively approved a 2 percent to 3 percent raise for the county's judges. The additional salaries will add about \$60,000 to the county's proposed \$332.5 million budget for next year.

During a previous budget review, Commissioner Glen Whitley argued for giving district court judges a raise, but he wanted it based on their entire pay and not just on the \$9,300 that the county contributes.

Whitley said the pay increase was necessary because the state has not raised district judge salaries in years. Under the proposed budget, the judges who get paid only by the county would have gotten bigger raises.

With this proposal, all judicial salaries will be set at about \$114,000. If the district court judges' salaries are increased by the Legislature in the future, the county's subsidy will be reduced.

"We love all our judges the same," Whitley said.

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Inquiry to focus on jail shoe plot

JAIL Guards follow an empty shoe to a plot to smuggle contraband into the Tarrant County Jail.

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Inmates on the seventh floor of the Tarrant County Jail, using a shoe on a makeshift rope lowered from a carefully broken window, tried to reel contraband into a cell late one night last week, Sheriff Dee Anderson revealed Thursday.

About 5 p.m. the next afternoon, when Anderson learned of the incident, guards locked down the entire jail, prohibiting more than 2,000 inmates from leaving their cells while officers searched for 10 to 12 hours in case weapons had been hauled up earlier in the shoe, Anderson said.

No weapons were found, he said, and jail officials are now convinced that only tobacco and some narcotics were sneaked in before the shoe on a rope was discovered Aug. 28.

The sheriff said he doubts that investigators will be able to find out which inmates masterminded the operation. But an internal investigation is under way to learn why the inmates' plot was not detected and why there was a delay in notifying command officers.

The rope was found late Aug. 28, and guards immediately searched the area and the inmates nearest the window. But it was the "middle of the [next] day before it reached my level of attention," Anderson said. Because of that, he said, "there's cer-

More on JAIL on 4B

tainly the potential of some people being disciplined."

A guard making a night "perimeter security check" saw the shoe — a jail-issued rubber shoe similar to a shower slipper — dangling on a rope that hung from a hole in a seventh-floor window.

The shoe was "well within reach for someone on the ground," Anderson said. By the time the guard got closer, "no one was around it," he said.

Inmates in a six-man cell had made a hole in the window by pecking on an outer pane of glass "a little at a time," in what appeared to be a "long, tedious process," Anderson said. They kept the innermost pane intact and in place, hiding their handiwork from guards, the sheriff said.

The inmates fashioned the rope by tearing strips from a mattress cover, tying the strips together and then attaching one end to the rubber shoe, Anderson said.

Most of the inmates on the seventh floor played dumb when asked about the hanging shoe. The prisoners who would talk said the guard spotted the shoe on only the second time it had been lowered, Anderson said.

Officers were told that the

first attempt, occurring a night or two earlier, resulted in a haul of "some tobacco and some narcotics," the sheriff said.

The lockdown search turned up other contraband — tobacco products, razor blades, needles used to draw tattoos — but no guns or knives, Anderson said.

Now, he said, "I feel confident we don't have a weapon that was introduced into the jail through that breach."

Anderson would not say whether information about the shoe's first, and apparently only, haul came from any of the six inmates who occupied the cell with the broken window.

But criminal charges are unlikely, Anderson said, because "trying to pin it on one particular person would be very difficult [and] it's not really an escape attempt."

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STAR-TELEGRAM/RALPH LAUER

Chief Deputy Jay Six watches prisoners on a work detail load confiscated eight-liners after a game room raid Wednesday.

Sheriff's Department seizes 8-liners in game room raid

By DON CHANCE
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

The Tarrant County sheriff and a team of deputies shut down a northwest Tarrant County game room Wednesday morning and confiscated eight-liner machines, prizes, computers, cash and business records.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said an undercover officer had spent time at the Treasures game room and saw "numerous violations of the gambling statute."

"The officer actually won a prize valued at over the allowable limit, and we've taken that into evidence," Anderson said.

Twenty-three machines were hauled out of Treasures by a crew of nonviolent offenders

GAMBLING

One game-room customer asked

the manager to give her credit for \$94 in winnings while deputies were raiding a northwest Tarrant County game room, Sheriff Dee Anderson says.

who are serving their sentences on work details under deputies' supervision.

The game room in the 11000 block of Farm Road 730 is one of several in a commercial area on the west side of Eagle Mountain Lake near Azle and Reno.

In April, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that eight-liners that give cash, cash-equivalent cer-

More on GAMBLING on 6B



Scooters and other "obvious violations of the gambling laws" were awarded at Treasures, said Sheriff Dee Anderson, who had said he would shut down game rooms if they did not close.

GAMBLING

Continued from 1B

tificates or prizes worth more than a token amount are illegal gambling devices. In June, the sheriff gave 68 game rooms in the county a two-week warning that he would shut them down if they did not close.

Treasures "is the first location that we're actually going to file a case on," Anderson said.

"We've warned them, we've been nice about it, we've more or less pleaded with them to shut down if they're operating illegally, and this is the next

step, if we have to go one by one and shut them down," he said Wednesday at Treasures.

Computer systems, electric scooters, TVs, jewelry, video games and other "obvious violations of the gambling laws" were awarded at the game room, Anderson said.

The identity of the owner of Treasures could not be learned Wednesday night.

Several customers in the game room during the raid were allowed to give statements and leave, the sheriff said.

"We could have written everyone in here a citation for gambling," Anderson said. "My approach was that these are

people who have been told by the proprietor that it's legal, so let's don't victimize them."

One of the customers wanted to redeem her \$94 in credit points, and the manager told her that he would put it on her account toward the computer she was trying to win, the sheriff said.

"So right before our very eyes, we saw the illegality of this process take place," Anderson said.

Many eight-liner operations donate portions of their proceeds to charitable organizations. But in his June warning, Anderson told them that they are still breaking the law.

Eight-liner raid



STAR-TELEGRAM/DON COOK

Deputy, suspect hit in shootout

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — A man trying to avoid arrest on a drug possession warrant opened fire on Tarrant County sheriff's deputies Friday morning, seriously wounding one before he was shot multiple times, officials said.

Deputy Mike Tatsch, a 10-year veteran, was wounded in the lower abdomen

SHOOTING A Tarrant County sheriff's deputy and a man wanted on a drug warrant were seriously injured Friday morning when the man opened fire on officers trying to arrest him, sheriff's officials said.

just below his bulletproof vest. The 40-year-old deputy was taken to Harris Methodist Fort Worth hospital, where he

underwent surgery and was listed in serious but stable condition Friday afternoon.

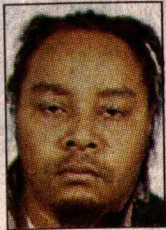
Doctors said they expected Tatsch to recover fully, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

The suspect, Korey Demaine Walker, 31, was shot multiple times in the upper chest and arm, Anderson said. Walker underwent surgery at John Peter Smith

n 13B



TATSCH



WALKER

Hospital and was listed in serious condition.

Anderson said police had received no information, nor did Walker's criminal history indicate, that the suspect would violently resist his arrest.

"At some point, he made the decision that he was going to shoot it out with us if we came in there," Anderson said. "He was completely outnumbered and outgunned, but he made that decision anyway."

The shooting occurred about 8 a.m. at The Enclave at City View apartments at 5401 Overton Ridge Blvd.

Anderson said Walker had been wanted for more than a year on a warrant accusing him of possession of a controlled substance. The warrant was obtained by the Tarrant County Narcotics Task Force.

Officers had recently received information that Walker was staying with an acquaintance at the Fort Worth apartment complex, Anderson said.

He said Tatsch, who usually works the night shift, had worked until 11 p.m. Thursday trying to find Walker. When he was unsuccessful, Tatsch decided to come in early Friday to try again with warrant officers from the day shift, Anderson said.

The officers, wearing full uniforms, began watching the apartment about 6 a.m. but Walker never emerged, Anderson said. They then attempted to make contact with him, he said.

"They beat on the door, got no response but at some point did see someone looking out through the window," Anderson said. "They felt for sure someone was in there, but no one would come to the door

open the front door. After finding it was also locked with a deadbolt lock, they forced the door open, Anderson said.

When the officers did not see the suspect in the living room or kitchen, they went to the apartment's only bedroom and found the door locked.

"Deputy Tatsch ... apparently tried to force the bedroom door open upon finding it was locked," Anderson said. "The other deputies said that almost instantaneously with him contacting the bedroom door, the first shot rang out."

Anderson said bullet holes in the door indicate that Walker fired at least three times through the door before he saw the deputies.

He continued to fire at the deputies and three of them returned fire, Anderson said.

"He finally went down in the living room area after gunning his way out of the bedroom into the living room," Anderson said.

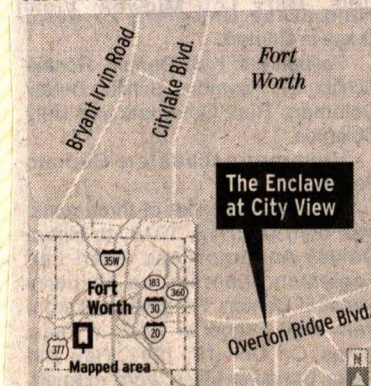
According to Tarrant County court records, Walker received deferred adjudication for possession of a controlled substance in 1992. His probation was revoked in 1997 and he was sentenced to two years in prison. He was indicted in November 2001 on a new charge of possession of a controlled substance, and a warrant was later issued for his arrest — the warrant that deputies were trying to serve Friday when the shooting occurred.

Anderson called the crime scene "sobering."

"The crime scene was very, very violent," Anderson said. "There was a lot of gunfire in a short period of time in a very confined space."

It was believed to be the first time since 1986 that a deputy was involved in a shooting, Anderson said.

"There's no doubt that [Walker] needed to be arrested. There's no doubt that this



despite some repeated knocking, pounding on the door announcing themselves a deputy sheriffs there to serve warrant."

About 8 a.m., the officers — four deputies and a sergeant — obtained a key from the apartment office and attempted to

SHOOTING

Continued from 1B

person needed to be taken off the street and not be able to walk among the rest of us out here. He showed exactly why this morning," Anderson said.

"I'm sorry it took one of our officers being injured to bring him to justice."

Anderson described Tatsch, who is married with no children, as a dedicated officer with whom other officers like to work.

The other officers involved in the incident were identified as Robert Hernandez, Cliff Johnson, Timothy Pickle and Sgt. Paul White. Anderson said the officers were placed on administrative leave, a routine procedure in officer-involved shootings.

The Sheriff's Department will investigate the shooting. The Fort Worth Police Department's major case unit is also investigating, Fort Worth police Sgt. Rene Kamper said.

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Sunday, September 21, 2003 | Star-Telegram

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks, Miss Spikes

Even as a writer, I find it difficult to express the emotions that flooded my mind, heart and soul upon learning of the passing of my first-grade teacher, Pauline Spikes. (See Sept. 16 obituaries.)

A few lines of a newspaper obituary fall exceedingly short in contrast to volumes that could be written about this woman who devoted more than four decades to teaching — 42 of those years at J.N. Long Elementary in Cleburne.

As the youngest son of a sharecropper family, I was introduced to this grande dame of education when I was in her class in 1933.

Miss Spikes was a woman tall in stature, one who could be somewhat frightening in maintaining discipline. But she possessed a "Miss Dove" quality that instilled in all her pupils the desire to learn.

Although she was frail in body and eyesight during my last visit, she smiled at the mention of my name and seemed pleased that I'd come.

As I left the nursing home that afternoon with mist in my eyes, I wondered if this woman remembered the small, bashful boy who was taunted by his classmates because of his large ears.

I owe this woman much more than mere respect. As I now approach my 76th birthday and reflect on school-day memories, I'd like to say again: "Thank you, Miss Spikes. Thanks for your impassioned guidance to a small boy in finding his own place in the sun."

Floyd F. Clark, Fort Worth

Wednesday, September 24, 2003

Suspect is charged in shooting of deputy

SHOOTING A man accused of shooting a deputy at a Fort Worth apartment complex is charged with attempted capital murder.

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — A 31-year-old man suspected of seriously wounding a Tarrant County deputy who was trying to arrest him Sept. 12 was charged Tuesday with attempted capital murder.

Korey Demaine Walker, who was shot multiple times by deputies in an exchange of gunfire, was released Saturday from John Peter Smith Hospital. He remains in the infirmary at the Tarrant County Jail with bail set at \$250,000.

Deputy Mike Tatsch, a 10-year Sheriff's Department veteran who was wounded in the lower abdomen, was released Sunday morning from Harris Methodist Fort Worth hospital. He is recovering at home, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

Tatsch is expected to make a full recovery.

"He's resting at home in good spirits," Anderson said.

The shooting occurred at the Enclave at City View apartments, 5401 Overton Ridge Blvd., as Tatsch and other officers attempted to arrest Walker on a warrant accusing him of possession of a controlled substance.

Sheriff's officials have said that the officers began watching the apartment early that morning hoping to arrest Walker as he left. But he never emerged. Officers then knocked on the door and announced they were there to serve a warrant, but Walker refused to open the door or come out, officials said.

The deputies forced their way into the apartment. Tatsch was trying to enter a locked bedroom when Walker fired at least three shots through the door, hitting the deputy once, officials said.

The deputies and Walker then exchanged gunfire, and Walker was struck multiple times in the upper chest and arm, officials said.

Anderson said an internal investigation into the shooting is under way.

The other officers involved in the shootout are Robert Hernandez, Cliff Johnson, Timothy Pickle and Sgt. Paul White. They were temporarily placed on administrative leave, a routine procedure after officer-involved shootings. Anderson said they have since returned to work.

Deanna Boyd, (817) 390-7655
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Friday, September 26, 2003

Star-Telegram

MTV plans to film life in local jail

DOCUMENTARY The Tarrant County Jail could be featured in a reality TV series if the Commissioners Court approves.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The network that shocked you with *The Osbournes* and rocked you with Marilyn Manson wants to take a gritty look at crime and punishment by shooting a documentary inside the Tarrant County Jail.

A film crew could start shooting *Inside*, a six- to seven-week documentary for MTV, as soon as Wednesday if an agreement is approved Tuesday by the Tarrant County Commissioners Court.

The proposed series would follow one or two inmates through the judicial process, from entering a plea to getting sentenced and completing the jail term.

"It's a look at the reality of what it is to be thrown in jail for the first time and how it affects a young person," said

More on DOCUMENTARY on 25A

DOCUMENTARY

Continued from 1A

Janelle Fiorito, executive producer for Los Angeles-based Endemol Entertainment, a production company that will film the series for MTV.

"It is meant to be a preventative series for young people who think going to jail is a cool thing."

The air date has not been scheduled, but Fiorito said the series will run before the end of the year.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said he likes the premise of the series.

"We went into it with a lot of hard questions," Anderson said. "We did research into the company and the producer.

"The concept is something law enforcement should support," he said. "If it shows a young person that it is not something glamorous or a badge of courage when they get out, it will help all of our desires to keep young people out of the criminal justice system."

Anderson said the four-person film crew will use handheld cameras, minimizing any disruption in the jail.

The county is not expected to incur any expenses, and the film crew will not be asked to pay for access.

"The positive publicity the county will receive will outweigh any inconvenience to us," Anderson said.

Anderson will ask commissioners next week to approve an agreement that sets strict security guidelines for the production crew and specifies that all crew members will be subjected to background

"The positive publicity the county will receive will outweigh any inconvenience to us."

— Sheriff Dee Anderson

checks.

"I'm comfortable that it is not going to be a big security risk," Anderson said.

Commissioner Marti Van-Ravenswaay said she will support the documentary as long as there are no security concerns.

"That would be wonderful if they could project that in a way that would mean something to young people," Van-Ravenswaay said.

Fiorito said the crew chose Fort Worth over Portland, Ore.; Denver; Boston; and Lexington, N.C.

"I've always been fascinated with Texas in general, and one of our producers is from Fort Worth," Fiorito said. "She said, 'You gotta go to Fort Worth.' She thought the people were great here, and that is what we experienced.

"Sheriff Anderson is very straight-shooting; he seems very progressive," Fiorito said. "We thought it is not only a great jail to highlight, but a great community."

The Commissioners Court will meet at 10 a.m. Tuesday in the Commissioners Courtroom on the fifth floor of the County Administration Building, 100 E. Weatherford St.

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B.D. Griffin, musician, commissioner

By JIM JONES

SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

RIVER OAKS — B.D. Griffin, a colorful Precinct 4 county commissioner from 1975 to 1986 and a pioneer in country-western and western swing music, died early Sunday at his River Oaks home after a brief battle with cancer.



GRIFFIN

He was 70.

Mr. Griffin began playing the fiddle at age 4 in the old Crystal Springs Ballroom in Fort Worth and later became friends with Willie Nelson, Roger Miller, Billy Walker and other country music personalities when they began their careers in Stockyards bars.

He played fiddle at the Grand Ole Opry in the 1960s and formed the Opry Traveling Band, performing with George Jones and other country stars. Mr. Griffin was honored as a

OBITUARY The former county commissioner performed with country stars and received honors from the Cowtown Society of Western Music and the Western Swing Society.

hero of the Cowtown Society of Western Music in 1999 and received similar honors in 1995 from the Western Swing Society of Sacramento, Calif.

"B.D. was a true friend," said another veteran musician, Billy Todd. "When anyone needed anything, B.D. was always there."

After graduating from North Side High School in 1950, Mr. Griffin attended Weatherford College, where he became a middleweight state boxing champion in 1950. He also boxed in the Marine Corps.

In the 1970s Mr. Griffin received a bachelor's degree in law enforcement from the University of Texas at Arlington. He was an investigator for the Tar-

rant County Sheriff's Department and district attorney's office before being elected commissioner.

He often campaigned for Democratic candidates with a band he called the Democats.

Mr. Griffin was past master of River Oaks Masonic Lodge 1311, a member of Moslah Temple Shrine and the Moslah Band and DFW Musicians Local 72-147.

Survivors include his wife, Bobbie; a son, B.D. Griffin III of River Oaks; two daughters, Debby Gunnels of Fort Worth, and Stephanie L. Fussell of Lakeside; a brother, Gene E. Griffin of Fort Worth; eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at First Baptist Church of Lakeside, 8801 Jacksboro Highway, with Masonic graveside services at Greenwood. Visitation will be 6 to 8 p.m. Monday at Biggers Funeral Home, 7139 Lake Worth Blvd.

B.D. Griffin



RIVER OAKS — B.D. Griffin, 70, former Precinct 4 Tarrant County commissioner, died Sunday, Sept. 28, 2003, at his home.

Funeral: 11 a.m. Tuesday at First Baptist Church of Lakeside. Masonic graveside services under the auspices of River Oaks Lodge 1311 A.F. & A.M. at Greenwood Memorial Park. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Monday at his home.

Memorials: Ronald McDonald House of Fort Worth, 1004 7th Ave., Fort Worth 76104 or a charity of choice.

A lifelong area resident, Mr. Griffin graduated from North Side High School in 1950, attended Weatherford College and the University of Texas Arlington.

He served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. He had worked for the Corps of Engineers, Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, Tarrant County District Attorney and served three terms as Precinct 4 commissioner from 1975 to 1986.

He was a Past Master and member of River Oaks Masonic Lodge 1311 A.F. & A.M., a member of Moslah Temple Shrine, the Moslah Band and DFW Musicians Union Local 72-147.

Mr. Griffin had a deep love and affection for music, beginning at the age of 3 years and entered the professional ranks at age 11.

Survivors: Wife, Bobbie Griffin of River Oaks; children, Debby J. Gunnels and her husband, Ronny of Fort Worth, B.D. Griffin III of River Oaks, Stephanie L. Fussell of Lakeside; brother, Gene E. Griffin and his wife, Martha of Fort Worth; grandchildren, Chad Freeman and his wife, Wendy of Everman, Brad Freeman of Haltom City, Chris Freeman of Lakeside, Caety Alfred and her husband, Mike of Dallas, Tiffini Griffin and her fiance', Adam Dean of Lakeside, B.D. "Chip" Griffin IV of River Oaks and J.B. Fussell of Lakeside; great-grandchildren, Kaitlyn Freeman of Everman and Kylie Freeman of Hurst; and a number of nieces and nephews.

Biggers Funeral Home
7139 Jacksboro Hwy., (817) 237-3341

Wednesday, October 1, 2003

Charles Duane Garrett



BURLESON — Charles Duane Garrett, 73, a loving and devoted husband, father and grandfather, went to be with our Lord on Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2003.

Funeral: 10 a.m. Thursday in Mountain Valley Funeral Home Chapel. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at Mountain Valley Funeral Home.

Duane was a lifelong Burleson resident, born May 7 1930, to O.B. and Ima Garrett. He graduated from Burleson High School in 1947, and served in the Navy Reserves. Duane managed the Burleson Locker Plant for many years prior to retiring from the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. He was preceded in death by his parents and first wife, Elaine.

Survivors: Wife of 33 years, Peggy; children, Keith Garrett, Kathy Colomo and husband, Russ, Alicia Putman, Craig Garrett and Karla Cox and husband, Ray; grandchildren, Jeremy Putman and wife, Nikki, Byron Putman, Kasey and Clint Cox and Courtney Colomo; great-grandchildren, Jacob and Gavin Putman; brother, Cliff Garrett and wife, Walula; many nieces, nephews, extended family and friends, including the Beefer's bunch; and pet, Lacey.

Mountain Valley Funeral Home
Burleson, (817) 517-5995

Wednesday, October 1, 2003

MTV goes behind bars



STAR-TELEGRAM/JEFFERY WASHINGTON

Above, inmate Brian J. Long fields reporters' questions Tuesday during a media tour of the Tarrant County Jail, which will be the scene of an MTV reality show. At right, inmates watch as a local news cameraman films a fellow inmate. Filming for the TV show, to be called *Inside*, could begin today. Sheriff Dee Anderson said the show is intended to discourage young people from getting into trouble and to show the sobering reality of life behind bars. "Jail is not cool," Anderson said.

STORY, 12B



FALLEN STARS

MTV goes behind bars to show how Tarrant inmates live

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Lights, cameras, incarceration.

The Tarrant County Commissioners Court gave the green light Tuesday for the filming of *Inside*, a 6- to 7-week documentary series to be aired this year on MTV.

The series will follow one or two young first-time offenders through the judicial process, focusing on their behind-bars experience.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said the show is intended to "discourage young people from getting into trouble," and to show the sobering reality of jail life.

Filming could start today. The show is produced by Endemol Entertainment, parent company of Lock and Key Productions, which has produced the TV shows *Fear Factor* and *Big Brother*.

This latest slice of reality TV has a deeper message:

"Jail is not cool," Anderson

JAIL Filming could start today on an MTV documentary series depicting jail life.

said. "Jail is a scary place.

"It doesn't smell very good, and the people aren't nice to you."

To drive that point home, some of Anderson's staff took reporters through the jail Tuesday, offering a glimpse of how inmates live.

The inmates live somewhat communally in 2-story pods, with numbered cells surrounding an open common area where the prisoners watch television, do chores and talk.

There's no privacy: Even the stainless steel toilets are visible from the cell-door windows. In the common areas, toilets are out in the open.

"This place ain't no place to be," said inmate Brian J. Long, 25, of Corsicana.

Long said his first night behind bars after being arrested on a theft charge was "scary."

"I got someone else telling me when I can eat, sleep," he said.

Reginald Fulton, 53, is serving the remaining six years of his 18-year drug sentence after violating his probation this year.

"It destroys families," said Fulton, whose mother died two years ago while he was in jail.

"Many younger men today have children. If you don't show your child positive footsteps, he's going to follow yours."

Fulton's son is also behind bars.

Fulton said he's turned his life around and encourages others to stay out of trouble.

Anderson said he hopes that by letting cameras into the jail and capitalizing on "a nationwide infatuation with Texas justice," officials can spread the message even further.

Amie Streater, (817)390-7541
astreater@star-telegram.com

Sunday, October 5, 2003

TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

By ALEX BRANCH
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The chained dog dances excitedly in the driveway, snarling at the officers creeping through the mud-caked front yard.

Sheriff's Deputy Tony Rocco steps slowly onto the porch as two Fort Worth police officers drift to the sides of the house, checking windows.

Rocco raps on the door, and a man in a T-shirt and jeans swings it open. Behind him, Rocco spots

Warrant officers seek those who don't want to be found

his prey, sprawled in an old chair.

Surprised, the man in the chair, who is wanted on a warrant alleging drug possession, has nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. He's handcuffed and put into Rocco's

patrol car.

"That's as good as they go," Rocco said, settling into the front seat. "He's there, there's no chasing or fighting, and we got him."

If only it were always this easy.

For the 17-member Fugitive Division of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, whose officers track down men and women accused of committing crimes ranging from bad checks to homicide, the unexpected is often in

More on WARRANTS on 10B

"That's what's hard: Most of these people know we're coming."

— Tony Rocco, sheriff's deputy



Tarrant County warrant officer and Detective Tony Rocco, center, and Fort Worth police officers J.G. Pinkston, left, and M.J. Rath enter a halfway house to make a warrant arrest on Sept. 23.

STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

the next room.

On Sept. 12, Rocco's partner, Mike Tatsch, was trying to arrest a man wanted on a drug-related charge when Tatsch was hit by shots fired through a locked bedroom door. A bullet struck Tatsch in the abdomen, just below his bullet-proof vest. He was released from the hospital Sept. 21.

The fugitive, who was also shot, faces an attempted capital murder charge.

Nothing in the fugitive's past suggested that he would react violently. But with 20,000 active warrants — 17,000 misdemeanors and 3,000 felonies — waiting to be served at any given time, warrant officers can know only so much about the fugitives they chase.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said that since he was elected three years ago, the number of active warrants waiting to be served has grown by 3,000. He included \$215,000 in this year's budget for five new deputies.

"We've got to keep up with the courts and keep getting the worst guys off the streets as fast as we can," Anderson said.

District Judge George Gallagher, who signs several warrants a day, said he knows that's no simple task. The number of felony cases filed in Tarrant County has risen 25 percent in the past two years, he said.

Tarrant County district and county judges sign between 600 and 800 warrants every week. A quarter of the people sought are usually found to be already in jail. An additional 250 warrants are cleared by other authorities, such as patrol officers who arrest fugitives after checking for warrants during traffic stops, according to the Sheriff's Department. The fugitive division usually can serve between 150 and 200 warrants a week.

"You can just tell by looking at the numbers, they're swimming upstream," Gallagher said. "It's a tough job."

It's also a dangerous job, especially when the people

they chase will do anything to avoid jail.

Rocco has a desk, but his patrol car is his office. Two bottles of Dasani water sit under his console-mounted laptop, next to a pair of binoculars.

Handwritten notes detailing fugitives' addresses and license plates are scribbled on scraps of paper, even on his mail.

A weathered copy of *The Pill Book: The Illustrated Guide to the Most Prescribed Drugs in the U.S.* lies on the floorboard.

"We come across drugs all the time arresting people," Rocco said. "I never worked narcotics, so I don't even pretend like I know what I'm looking at."

Most of the warrants are either for people accused of violating the terms of their probation or bail revocations. The warrants are signed by judges at the request of the Tarrant County district attorney's office, state probation officers or bail bondsmen.

Each warrant in Rocco's stack includes the fugitive's criminal history and a mug shot — if that person has been arrested before.

Serving warrants without photos can be frustrating and, sometimes, embarrassing. Once, Rocco went to a house looking for a woman wanted on a drug-related warrant. The woman who answered the door at the house said she knew the fugitive, called her vulgar names and said she slept around. She then sent Rocco down the street, saying the woman he was looking for was there turning tricks.

"Later, I realized the woman I was looking for was the woman I had talked to," Rocco said. "I drove back over there going 'Boy, am I an idiot.'"

The county is divided into five districts, each with its own warrant officers. Rocco is responsible for southeast Fort Worth.

Zippering along Interstate 30, Rocco heads to a halfway house near Elmwood Avenue and Interstate 35W looking for a man who violated his bail agreement on a charge of sexual assault of a child under 17.

Bail violators, like probation violators, are often hard to find.

"He knows he's screwed up," Rocco said. "They know the rules and know we'll be coming to find them. That's what's hard: Most of these people know we're coming. I bet he'll be long gone."

Rocco's intuition about this man is right — he's gone. The halfway house operators kicked him out a week ago for bringing shady friends around. No one knows where he went.

Before going into the house, Rocco radioed for assistance from two Fort Worth police officers, who help when they're not busy. In return, deputies help police serve their probable-cause warrants, a different kind of warrant used by detectives investigating a crime.

Calling for backup means waiting, but it's wiser to ask for help before a problem arises than after. The shootout that injured Tatsch, who was with four other officers, lasted 10 seconds.

Rocco, who joined the division in 1995, has never been shot. But he's been shot at, punched, kicked, hit with a rake and a tree limb, even had his hands slammed in a car door and been dragged 30 feet across a parking lot.

"That one hurt a little," Rocco said.

If they don't fight and they don't run, they hide.

Some fugitives build false walls, diving into cubbyholes when officers arrive. Others rig floorboards so they can drop beneath the house. Rocco found one man in a freezer, and another in the attic, naked and covered with insulation.

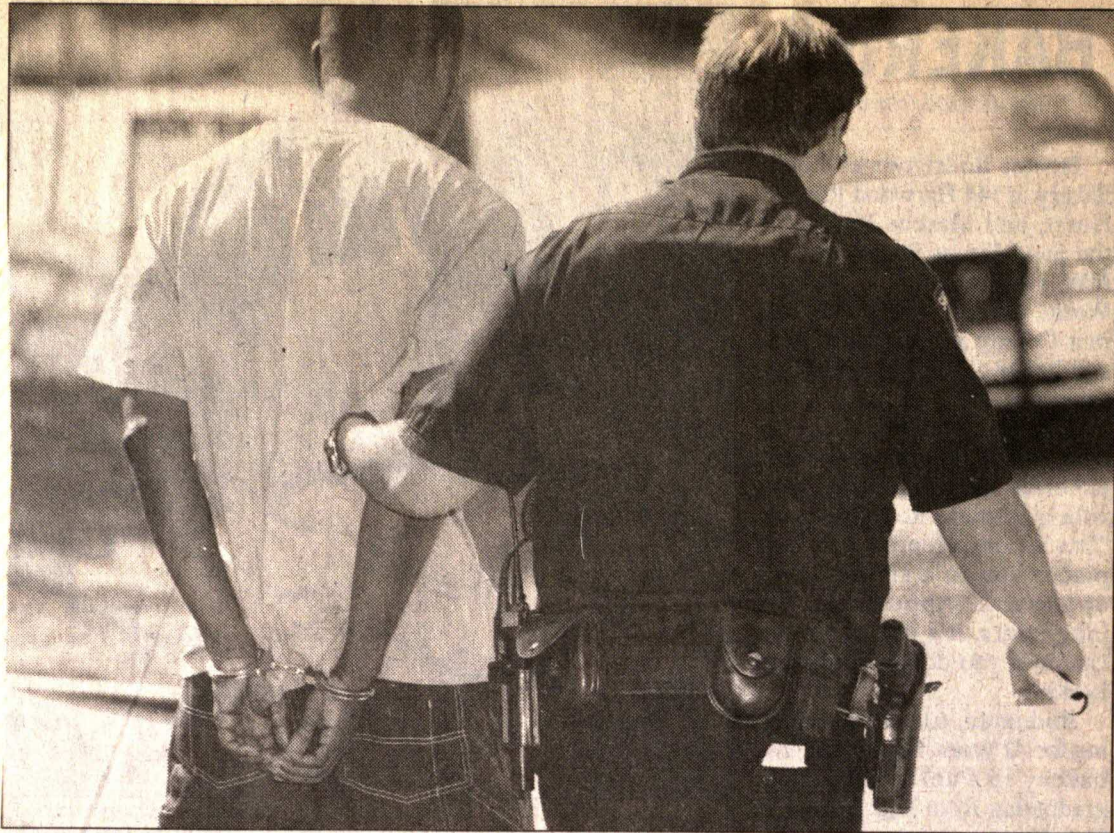
For all the officers' adrenaline rushes — forced entries, fence-scaling, foot chases — they have many more moments of waiting and frustration.

Rocco has his share of both on this day.

He misses a woman wanted on theft charges by minutes; he and two officers appear to corner a woman, wanted on credit card abuse charges, in a mobile home park, but she somehow

WARRANTS

Continued from 1B



STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Warrant officer and Detective Tony Rocco escorts a Fort Worth man to a car for transport to the Tarrant County Jail. The man was arrested on Sept. 23 on an outstanding warrant alleging cocaine possession.

slips by them; the only sign of a man wanted on an intoxication manslaughter charge is a beer keg left on his girlfriend's balcony.

"Some days you get most of them; other days you get none," Rocco said, sitting in his car, scanning license plates outside an Arlington apartment. "I don't like going home unless I at least get one."

Sometimes, he doesn't go home at all.

Three years ago, Rocco and two deputies spent 36 hours nonstop chasing a Los Angeles gang member who was accused of killing an off-duty police officer in California and fled to Texas. They finally caught him at a hotel at Riverside Drive and East Lancaster Avenue.

Marathon searches are only for the worst of the worst, but it's common for officers to steadily hunt a fugitive for more than a year, he said.

Rocco puts this day's unserved warrants back in his pile. He'll keep working them until a fresh tip comes along.

He ended the day with six arrests.

Not bad, and tomorrow he'll have 250 more chances.

Alex Branch, (817) 390-7689
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2 rivals may bid for jail contract

COUNTY Jack Madera and John Sammons, former business partners, are expected to vie for a multimillion-dollar contract. Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson says he has socialized with both.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Day in and day out, workers sling hash to feed the 3,500 Tarrant County Jail inmates three hot meals a day.

But as companies line up this month to bid for a multimillion-dollar food-services contract, the focus has shifted from slinging hash to slinging mud.

Two of the companies expected to bid on the contract are run by former business partners turned bitter rivals.

Sealed bids are due to the Tarrant County purchasing department by Oct. 27. The contract, now held by Hurst-based Mid-States Services, is worth about \$4.1 million a year.

Among the companies expected to bid is Dallas-based Mid-America Services, run by Jack Madera. He has a long history of winning lucrative contracts and maintaining friendships with elected officials who have a say in whether the company gets public business.

Mid-America will compete for the contract against Mid-States, which Madera started in 1970 and sold in February 1999.

John Sammons, chief executive of Mid-States and one of the investors who bought the company from Madera, said there is more to the bid than

just a second helping of cafeteria business.

"Our group is committed to running this company with integrity," Sammons said. "There is a clear-cut delineation between the Mid-States of the past and the Mid-States of today.

"The kind of customer base we want is the kind who embraces integrity in government."

Business and pleasure

Many in Texas law enforcement consider Madera a friend, including Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson, whose office oversees jail operations including the kitchen.

"The relationship began when I was elected," Anderson said. "Jack was, at that point, a consultant for Mid-States.



ANDERSON

"Both he and John [Sammons] became friends of mine and supporters."

Sammons says Madera's ties to law-enforcement officials prompted him to keep Madera on board as a consultant after Madera sold Mid-States in 1999.

Madera and Sammons parted ways in March 2002, when Madera started Mid-America after a three-year non-competition agreement expired with Mid-States.

Madera looked to his old friends to help his new business and promptly won contracts in Dallas and Denton counties.

There are two types of contracts: food-services contracts, under which the county pays companies to provide meals to inmates, and commissary contracts, under which companies sell snacks and other items to inmates and return a portion of the proceeds to the county.

Sheriffs control jail commissaries, including selection of the companies that handle the services. Bids are required, and county proceeds must be used to benefit inmates.

A provision applying only to Tarrant County requires commissioners court approval of commissary contracts.

Some of Madera's contracts have raised eyebrows. In Dallas, Madera's relationship with Sheriff Jim Bowles has been criticized since Bowles awarded the commissary contract to Mid-America in June 2002.

One Dallas County official labeled the contract a "bad business decision," and questions have been raised about whether Madera exerted undue influence through his friendships. But no specific allegations of wrongdoing have been voiced publicly.

Madera's bid in Dallas County gave the sheriff's department about \$600,000 a year, less than what was offered by two other competitors, including Mid-States.

In Tarrant County, Anderson awarded Madera's Mid-America the contract for commissary services in April. The company sells aspirin, snacks, soap and other items from carts, dubbed "banana wagons," that workers wheel through the jail.

Under the commissary contract, Madera will pay the sheriff's office at least \$750,000 a year. As was the case in Denton and Dallas counties, Madera won the Tarrant County business by beating out Mid-States, which held the existing contracts.

'No hidden agenda'

Anderson says he is confident that the bidding will be above board, as he says it was when he awarded Mid-America the commissary contract.

Tarrant County commissioners are expected to vote on the food-services contract by Dec. 31. Six companies are expected to submit bids, which will be analyzed by an evaluation committee.

Anderson said the current commissary contract shows that local officials are committed to hammering out the best deal possible.

"I believe we have the most lucrative contract for any county in the state," Anderson said. "It is second to none."

Anderson said he has lunched regularly and dined occasionally with Madera and has dined with Sammons, played golf at his country club and seen a Dallas Stars game

from a luxury box, all at Sammons' expense.

"I don't do anything in secret," Anderson said. "There is no hidden agenda.

"Because we are clients, we have a relationship with those people," he said. "Certainly, nothing improper has taken place."

Sammons also said there is nothing improper about his relationship with Anderson.

"Building relationships is part of doing business in the public and the private sector," Sammons said. "It is hard to develop trust."

Madera would not comment to the *Star-Telegram* except to say he intends to bid on the jail food-services contract and that he denies any inappropriate relationships with Tarrant County officials.

"There is nothing inappropriate going on in Dallas, either," Madera said.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, who represents Precinct 4, in the northwest part of the county, said his 15- to 20-year friendship with Madera has not influenced county business.

"I've always tried to vote for what I thought was the best deal, and it's what I'll do this time," Johnson said.

Sammons, however, said he'll watch the bidding closely to ensure that he's treated fairly.

He won't be alone.

Patrick Turner, regional sales director for Aramark Corp., which also expects to bid on the contract, said: "On a level playing field, we have always been able to compete. But that's always been the question, whether it has always been a level playing field."

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County praises sheriff for reining in overtime

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

GOVERNMENT

Tarrant County sheriff

When Dee Anderson took over as Tarrant County sheriff more than two years ago, he could sum up in two letters one of the department's biggest problems:

OT.

Overtime pay was so rampant under the previous sheriff, David Williams, that workers in the confinement division often received an extra week's pay in overtime every month.

Dee Anderson says the department spent \$202,519 on OT in 2003, compared with \$1.58 million in 2000.

Williams had mandated six-day work weeks, and the county had no choice but to pay. In fiscal year 2000, total overtime pay hit \$1.58 million.

In fiscal 2003, which ended last month, Anderson cut the overtime total to \$202,519.

More on GOVERNMENT on 7B

GOVERNMENT

Continued from 1B

Anderson gave a brief report on the overtime savings to the Tarrant County commissioners court Tuesday, saying the previous overtime problem was "like a bad dream."



ANDERSON

"There was great concern with overtime, that it was being abused ... perhaps intentionally," Anderson said. "I'm hoping I can come back next year and tell you we've cut it again, but we're pretty much bare-bones."

The sheriff credited his employees with meeting the overtime goals he set for the department.

Commissioners spent a couple of minutes praising the sheriff not only for controlling overtime costs but also for hiring good managers,

including Executive Chief Deputy Bob Knowles.

"You had the insight to bring in those people," Commissioner Glen Whitley said.

After the meeting, Commissioner J.D. Johnson said, "Bob Knowles is the best jail administrator in the state of Texas, and we are very fortunate to have him."

In other action Tuesday, commissioners discussed appointments to two committees that will negotiate service plans for two areas slated to be annexed by Fort Worth.

The annexation of 7,700 acres along U.S. 287 and 1,200 acres near Eagle Mountain Lake is expected to be complete in late 2005.

The city must now begin negotiations with property owners in the two areas for fire, ambulance and other services. The city has asked commissioners to appoint five members from each area to represent property owners in the negotiations, which must be completed by April 1.

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Gary L. Williams**1931 - 2003**

Gary L. Williams, 72, a beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, died Monday, Oct. 13, 2003, surrounded by members of his family.

Funeral: 4:30 p.m. Thursday at North Pointe Baptist Church of Hurst. Graveside service: 2:30 p.m. Thursday in Greenwood Memorial Park, with the Rev. Rick Doyle and the Rev. John Tyler officiating. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at Greenwood Funeral Home.

Pallbearers: Mickey Doyle, Mike Durham, Matt Ramsey, Joe Knox Reed, Randy Womack, Tony Womack and Todd Womack.

Gary was born July 2, 1931, in Fort Worth to Jeff and Minnie Williams. He lived most of his life in the Fort Worth area. He fought a long and courageous battle with many health complications. It was his faith in the Lord that sustained him and gave him peace and courage during his final days. All who knew and loved Gary will miss his great sense of humor, his jokes and his special gift of encouragement.

Gary was preceded in death by his parents; a brother, Earl; and a sister, Betty.

Survivors: Wife, Barbara Williams; sons, Darrell Williams and wife, Mary, and Jeff Williams and wife, Suzanne; daughter, Sharon Collins and husband, Don; adopted son, Dave Hammond and wife, Vicki; grandchildren, Candice and Crysti Williams, Kyle and Kassie Collins, Joshua, Jonathan, Joseph and John Paul Williams, Matt and Christie Oliver and Chris and Cody Hammond; and a large extended family.

Published in the Star-Telegram on 10/15/2003.



STAR-TELEGRAM/TOM PENNINGTON

Tarrant County Jail inmates work with Mid-States Services in the kitchen of the facility Oct. 10. Below, Phyllis Coutts eats lunch in the Mansfield Jail on Thursday. The meal included grilled cheese sandwiches, tomato soup, celery, carrots and peaches.

MEALS BEHIND BARS



Haute cuisine is not on the menu as officials prepare to negotiate a deal to feed Tarrant County inmates.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

It's Friday, burrito day. A good day for the palates of Tarrant County Jail inmates.

As expected, inmates are less than thrilled with the three meals they are served each day by Mid-States Services Inc.

Fish patties, chicken-fried steak, bologna and cheese sandwiches, Salisbury steak and, according to one female inmate, "something that tastes like it wants to be sirloin."

But the burritos, served with white rice, pinto beans, two slices of bread, two sandwich cookies and a tiny packet of taco sauce, are a highlight in the rotation.



A Tarrant County Jail inmate delivers a food cart to an inmate pod during lunch on Oct. 10. The food-services company must follow a strict caloric and nutritional plan when making meals.

FOOD

Continued from 1B

Unfortunately for them, gourmet delights will not be on the menu.

There are few references in the 32-page proposal request dealing with the taste and overall palate-pleasing nature of the meals served behind bars.

"The successful vendor will be required to serve tasty, appetizing, wholesome quality food," reads a sentence on page 12 of the county's proposal request.

"Therefore, all vendors must submit, with their proposal, a sample regular menu detailing at least 14 days of non-repetitive meals."

According to the inmates, the meatloaf sounds a lot better on paper than it tastes.

Aside from the sample menu and strict dietary guidelines of 2,700 calories — 63 percent from carbohydrates, 25 percent from fat and 12 percent from protein — the winning bid will be selected largely on its ability to deliver the most appetizing bottom line.

Mid-States and five other companies are expected to compete for the food-services contract, which is worth about \$4.1 million a year.

Want to make Sheriff Dee Anderson laugh? Ask him if a taste test is part of the bid review process.

"We don't want to sacrifice taste completely," Anderson said. "If we wanted to do that, we could feed them for 25 cents a meal."

"When I started out [in 1980] as a cop in Arlington, at

Jailhouse cuisine

Here's what was on the menu Friday at the Tarrant County Jail:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
3/4 cup of grits	1 bean burrito	3 ounces of fried fish
1 piece of coffee cake	1/2 cup of rice	1/2 cup of whipped potatoes
1 ounce of peanut butter	1/2 cup of pinto beans	1/2 cup of broccoli
2 packets of jelly	1 packet of taco sauce	1/2 cup of chicken gravy
2 slices of bread	2 slices of bread	2 slices of bread
1/2 cup of canned fruit	2 cookies	1 slice of cake
1/2 ounce of margarine	6 ounces of fruit drink	6 ounces of fruit drink
6 ounces of coffee		
8 ounces of milk		

SOURCE: Tarrant County Sheriff's Department

STAR-TELEGRAM/DEWUAN X. DAVIS

the municipal jail we fed them a 29-cent chicken pot pie and a glass of water," Anderson said.

"If that's not a deterrent not to come back to jail, I don't know what is. I don't want them to like the food so much they don't want to leave."

The county now pays \$1.04 per meal, which includes complimentary upgraded meals served to jail officers in separate dining rooms.

"The food we serve at Tarrant County is exactly what the contract calls for," said John Sammons, chief executive of Mid-States.

Mid-States has an outside dietitian help plan the menus and coordinate compliance with the contract's nutritional guidelines, Sammons said.

Anderson said he has sampled the food, so he would know what the inmates are getting.

"Anyone who has ever been in the hospital will feel right at home in jail," Anderson said. "It has that bland, generic taste all mass-produced food has."

"They make more than 10,000 meals a day, and you have to expect a level of quali-

ty with that much food preparation," he said. "I think we exceed that level."

"We don't go overboard, but we do a good job."

Registered dietitian Emily Haeussler reviewed three weeks of jail menus at the *Star-Telegram's* request, as well as the protein, fat, carbohydrate and calorie requirements of the food service contract. She gave the food service a thumbs-up.

"I interview people regularly on their usual food intake, and this is by far more balanced in terms of fruit and vegetable intake and variety than what most of the people I interview eat," she said.

"They have a pretty good variety of food, and it is definitely nutritionally adequate and there is adequate protein."

Anderson said the key in negotiating the new food-service contract will be finding a "middle ground" between taste and cost, a balance he is confident the county jail will continue to have.

"It has to be nutritious, but not overly expensive."

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"At least there's some protein," said inmate Toni McMurray, 31, of the bean-paste-filled burritos. "They gotta stop feeding us all this starch."

As Tarrant County prepares to accept bids this month for the jail's food-services contract, inmates have plenty of suggestions for the company that wins the five-year contract.

More on FOOD on 4B

3 squares and a cell

In jails, better food can make for better order

By PAUL BOURGEOIS
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

It's probably not worth getting arrested for, but there is good food to be found in the Mansfield and Johnson County jails.

Biscuits, fresh fruit, chicken-fried steak, stew, cookies — not your average jailhouse cuisine.

"The food is much better here than in Tarrant County," said Phyllis Coutts, a cheery 44-year-old incarcerated for going on "dates" for money. Coutts is on her fourth or fifth stay in the Mansfield Jail.

"The food is more balanced," Coutts said. "In California, it was terrible. All we got was beans, rice and potatoes. You want to be here on Friday; we get fish, real fish."

Cellmate Ann Cortez, 35, was a little less exuberant.

"It's OK. I just wish we could get more of it," said Cortez, another working girl. There are no seconds in jail.

Jesse Bates, 52, of Alvarado rates Johnson County's food high, especially when compared with Tarrant County's.

"It's a whole lot better. There's more of it and it's better quality," said Bates, incarcerated for violating his parole.

"It's varied and has flavor," another Johnson County inmate said.

Capt. Tom Craig, the Johnson County Jail administrator, said good food goes a long way in maintaining order.

"If you don't serve quality and quantity, you can have problems," said Craig, who has worked in jails and prisons for 40 years. He holds costs to \$1 per meal through careful shopping and by letting some inmates work in the kitchen.

The Johnson County Jail usually houses 460 to 470 prisoners. Those who work in the kitchen get extra chow and have their own cell away from the general population. They are supervised by two paid professionals.

"Sometimes if one inmate gets in trouble and we have to put him back in the general population, the guy who runs the kitchen complains that he was his top cook," Craig said.

Friday's menu: breakfast — biscuits, sausage, gravy, fresh fruit, milk and coffee; lunch — chicken-fried steak, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, cookies and iced tea; supper — baked fish,

brown rice, gravy, coleslaw, cake and iced tea.

Craig said the goal is 3,000 calories a day. Many members of the jail staff, Craig included, eat what the prisoners eat.

Lt. Ann Brown, a jail supervisor, said some prisoners have trouble getting into their civilian clothes when they leave.

Craig is a stickler for cleanliness and is proud to say the jail kitchen rated 100 in a recent health inspection.

Prisoners awaiting trial or arraignment in Fort Worth, which has no municipal jail of its own, stay in the Mansfield Jail.

The Fort Worth detainees usually number 120 to 130, but most days as many as 100 move out and an equal number move in, said Capt. Shirley Hensiek.

Deputy Chief Sherman Baxter said the facility also houses 60 or 70 federal prisoners. There are usually only a few prisoners from Mansfield. All prisoners get the same chow.

A typical breakfast might be oatmeal, fruit, a boiled egg, juice and milk. Sometimes it might be French toast and fruit or biscuits, sausage and gravy.

Lunch might be beef stew, salad, cornbread and fruit.

At night, it's a sandwich, often ham or turkey, with chips, pickles, fruit and milk. That way, the women who cook at the jail can be home with their families.

Baxter said the turnover is too great for inmate cooks, so the jail employs five full-time cooks.

Chief cook Dianne Brister has been there eight years.

Bioleine Bourland, who has been there 12 years, is the first on the job in the morning, arriving at 3:30 a.m. and serving breakfast starting at 4:30 a.m.

Other meals come early as well: Lunch starts at 10:45 a.m., and dinner at 3:30 or 4 p.m.

Brister said few complain.

"We put a lot of love into what we cook. The ladies are proud of their work," Brister said.

Holidays, however, aren't special in jail.

"On holidays we want to be home with our own families," Brister said, so inmates have to survive on sandwiches for a day.

"They are in jail, after all."

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3 arrested in CD raid at flea market

By MITCH MITCHELL
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FOREST HILL — Three people suspected of possessing counterfeit compact discs were arrested Saturday during a raid at a flea market at 3544 Mansfield Highway, authorities said.

The arrests were the result of a monthlong investigation by the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department and the Recording Industry Association of America, said sheriff's Detective Mike Hargis.

Recording industry investigators got a tip that triggered the inquiry, and, after identifying some suspects, they contacted the Sheriff's Department, Hargis said.

"They cannot make any arrest or seize any of the material, so they needed us to assist," Hargis said.

Authorities had targeted six suspects, but three abandoned

COUNTERFEITING Officials close down booths where people were suspected of selling counterfeit compact discs.

their booths before officers arrived to arrest them, Hargis said. Warrants may be issued for the other three, Sgt. Stormy Farmer said.

Amparo Rodrigues, 59, Silverio Sanchez, 43, and Karen Martinez, 29, were arrested and booked into the Tarrant County Jail in connection with the raid. All three face charges of illegally labeling records.

The three suspects were released Saturday night because of a paperwork mix-up, Sgt. Michael Gravitt said. The Sheriff's Department will straighten out the paperwork and refile the charges, Gravitt said.

Those convicted of possessing 65 or more counterfeit discs



STAR-TELEGRAM/SHARON M. STEINMAN

Sheriff's Deputy D. Blanton arrests a woman at a flea market on Mansfield Highway on Saturday. She was one of three people detained on suspicion of possessing counterfeit compact discs.

face up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000, authorities said.

Hargis estimated that the largest booth had about 2,000 compact discs, selling for \$3 to \$14 each.

Each counterfeit disc cost about 35 cents to make, but the sellers could have purchased the counterfeit material from someone who mass-produces the discs, said Don Valdez, vice president and regional counsel for the Recording Industry Association of America.

"Even if they were paying 75 cents each, they were still selling the cheapest ones for four times what they paid," Valdez said.

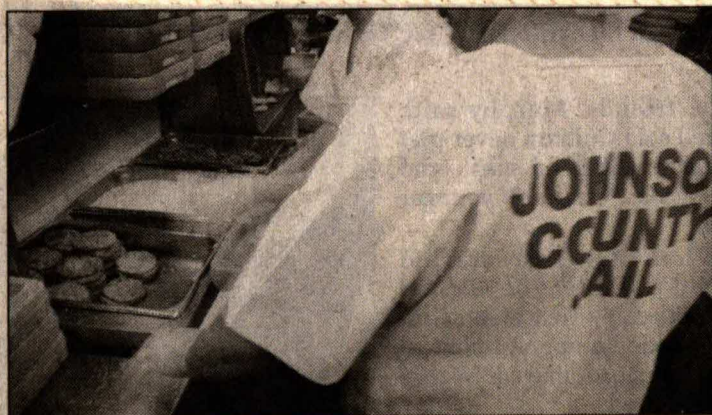
The piracy of intellectual property costs the recording

industry more than \$1 million a day, Valdez said. Recording companies, artists, publishers, musicians, writers and anyone involved in creating music loses money from this type of theft, he said.

"It is no fun to try and make a living selling music and then have that living taken out from under you by a group of thieves," Valdez said. "And even though some get arrested, there will be a certain number of people who will get back into it because of the profits they can make."

"This is like selling drugs without the stigma of being a drug dealer."

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STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Johnson County Jail inmates prepare a lunch of chicken-fried steak with gravy, bread, butter, green beans, cookies and iced tea. Inmates who work in the kitchen get extra chow and have their own cell. In photo at right, Dianne Brister, chief cook at the Mansfield Jail, talks with visitors while Bioleine Bourland ladles tomato soup. "We put a lot of love into what we cook. The ladies are proud of their work," Brister said.



Monday, October 27, 2003

Straight tickets

Your Oct. 20 editorial ("What a difference") about the debacle of former Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams highlighted the huge problem of "top of the ticket" voting.

Having worked at the polls in many elections, I heard voter after voter say, "I just want to vote a straight ticket." Williams was not only elected but re-elected over a qualified opponent because many voters had no idea for whom they were voting.

In the state where I grew up, there was no straight-ticket voting. Voters had to select each candidate individually.

Because the Republican Party didn't run a qualified candidate against Williams in its primary

after his first term, he was elected by "top of the ticket" voters. After two terms, even his own party officials realized what a disaster they had on their hands. Meanwhile, the people of Tarrant County suffered.

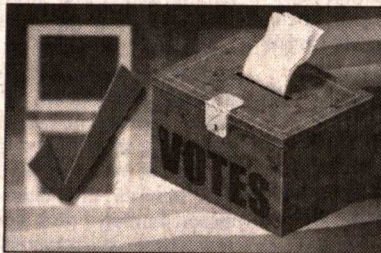
Straight-ticket voting assures

that many incompetent "party hacks" get votes they don't deserve.

Thank goodness that the voters in five GOP districts had the sense to select con-

gressmen who served the needs of their area, regardless of party. Unfortunately, U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay is out to assure that they'll be punished by breaking up their districts and their communities.

Barbara Rubin, Fort Worth



KRT

Crown Vic is debated for sheriff

CARS Tarrant County commissioners will consider purchasing police cruisers amid concerns about their safety.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A controversial proposal to purchase 21 Ford Crown Victoria police cruisers could force Tarrant County commissioners today to weigh safety, cost and a lack of patrol car choices.

Despite concerns that the "police interceptor" patrol cars may be unsafe in rear-end collisions, commissioners will consider purchasing the vehicles for the sheriff's department and other law enforcement divisions for more than \$400,000.

Some Tarrant County officials say they are comfortable buying Crown Victorias.

What remains to be seen is whether that comfort level is shared by commissioners. At least one commissioner says she'll vote against the purchase, and another raised concerns earlier this year when the issue came before the court.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said he prefers that the county purchase Ford Expeditions, but will defer to the commissioners' judgment.

Commissioners must weigh several factors in making their decision:

- There are few options on the market for police agencies needing rear-wheel-drive, full-size vehicles.

- The Crown Victorias have a base price of \$19,307, Anderson said, and the Expeditions cost at least \$10,000 more. Plus, sport-utility

More on CARS on 4B



"I don't think you can be in law enforcement and not be concerned about it," Sheriff Dee Anderson said of the Crown Victoria's safety record. He said he prefers that the county purchase Ford Expeditions, but will defer to the commissioners' judgment.

vehicles have an added rollover risk.

- Since 1983, 14 law enforcement officers driving Crown Victorias have died in rear-end collisions when the cars' gas tanks ruptured and caught fire.

One of those fires killed Dallas police officer Patrick Metzler. Dallas has sued Ford and has stopped buying Crown Victorias, and other police agencies have taken a hard look at whether they should continue buying the popular cruisers.

Ford currently controls about 80 percent of the police cruiser market, company spokeswoman Kristen Kinney said Monday.

The automaker has made safety improvements to the Crown Victorias and plans to add a fire suppression system to the cruisers for its 2005 model cars.

"It has always been our position that the vehicle is safe," Kinley said. Ford believes that the problems with the Crown Victorias are "due to increased exposure of high-speed, rear-end impacts that police are exposed to," she said.

The risks are too high for Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay, who said Monday that she plans to vote against the purchase.

"I think it is still a risky proposition," VanRavenswaay said. "Until the investigation [of the Crown Victoria's safety] is completed, until we have a definitive answer — yes or no — I am not supportive of the continued purchases of Crown Victorias."

Commissioner Dionne Bagsby could not be reached to comment Monday, but earlier this year she questioned the county's purchase of Crown Victorias.

Commissioners Glen Whitley and J.D. Johnson said Monday they planned to vote in

favor of the purchase.

"I think everybody has looked at it and they are aware of concerns out there, but there are not really a whole lot of other alternatives," Whitley said.

Whitley said he would support the wishes of the Sheriff's Department and the county transportation department.

"If they feel like that is what they need and they are aware of the concerns and problems, then I am going to support them," he said. "There is really not an alternative out there."

Johnson said the concerns of those driving the vehicles would play a big role in his decision.

"I don't want employees driving something they feel is unsafe," Johnson said. "If they feel comfortable driving them, I feel comfortable buying them."

Johnson said the county's options are limited.

"It appears Ford has taken care of the problems with the gas tank, so I am flexible," he said. "It is the only full-size

police package on the market. I don't know of any car that is not going to have a problem being hit at 60 miles an hour from the rear."

Anderson will probably make a case today for the purchase of Ford Expeditions, at least for patrol officers, who may be more likely to encounter dangerous driving speeds and unsafe road conditions than an officer serving warrants.

"I don't think you can be in law enforcement and not be concerned about it," Anderson said of the Crown Victoria's safety record. "But are my concerns overriding where I would refuse to drive them? No.

"We will drive what the commissioners choose to buy," he said. "But with the current climate and as much concern as there is, I personally would be more comfortable moving away from them for the time being."

County Purchasing Agent Jack Beacham said he talked to many purchasing agents at a

recent conference who were putting Crown Victorias back on the "buy" list.

"There is always going to be a concern when you purchase any vehicle," he said. "But there is no viable alternative. It is the only full-size, rear-wheel-drive [police cruiser] in production."

Tarrant County's experience with Crown Victorias has been positive so far, said county fleet manager Joylee Moore.

"We have not had any trouble with the Crown Vics," she said. "We've tried to keep on top of recalls and technical service bulletins to keep them safe."

"They are real serviceable, and they have proven to be a viable tool for patrol functions."

Moore said she hopes commissioners approve the purchase today.

"I hope they feel comfortable in passing it," she said. "Our alternatives are pretty slim to none."

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Crown Victoria buy stalled as sheriff eyes options

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Tarrant County commissioners tabled a controversial proposal Tuesday to buy 21 Crown Victoria patrol cars to give Sheriff Dee Anderson time to explore other options.

The safety record of Crown Victoria Police Interceptor cruisers is being debated nationwide. Since 1983, 14 police officers — including a Dallas officer — have died when their cars' fuel tanks ruptured and caught fire after rear-end collisions.

Until the safety questions are resolved, Anderson wants the county to buy Ford Expeditions instead, at least for his patrol officers, who are more likely to encounter hazardous

VEHICLES

Sheriff Dee Anderson will spend the next week deciding what kind of cruiser best suits his patrol division.

driving conditions.

The county needs to buy 21 vehicles — 14 for the Sheriff's Department, four for the district attorney's office and three for constables — to replace worn-out vehicles.

Only 10 of the new vehicles are slated for assignment to the sheriff's patrol division, so commissioners could decide to split the purchase between the two vehicles when they take up the issue at their meeting next week.

The base cost of the Expe-

dition is about \$10,000 more than the \$19,307 base cost of the Crown Victoria.

Options and modifications increase the cost. One issue that wasn't discussed in the meeting Tuesday is whether the Expeditions will have higher fuel costs, as sport utility vehicles often don't match the fuel economy of sedans.

"It's a matter of money, whether anyone wants to say that or not," Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said after the meeting. "It is also a matter of safety. ... Each of us will have to vote our own conscience."

During the meeting, Bagsby raised questions about the proposed purchase before any other commissioner had a chance to make a motion in

favor of the purchase.

After listening to the lengthy debate, Bagsby said she didn't think she could vote in favor of buying Crown Victorias for county employees without conclusive scientific data that they are safe. Specifically, she wants Ford to test the Crown Victoria in a 75-mph rear-end crash in conditions similar to what a patrol officer might encounter on the job.

"Barring that, I'm not inclined to vote for them, particularly for patrol vehicles," she said.

Commissioner Marti Van-Ravenswaay also said she didn't want the county buying Crown Victorias.

"The question for me is, Would I want my family mem-

ber in that vehicle?" she said.

Commissioners Glen Whitley and J.D. Johnson argued that there is a lack of alternative vehicles with the necessary police requirements and that any vehicle would fare badly in a high-speed rear-end crash.

Ford's Crown Victoria is the only full-size, rear-wheel-drive sedan sold for use as a police cruiser.

Johnson suggested that Anderson look into using pickup cruisers like those driven by some highway patrol officers.

Anderson said he would explore the options and costs and report to commissioners next week.

Anderson said after the

meeting that he was satisfied that commissioners had given him time to research other vehicles.

Anderson's patrol division has 26 vehicles, 23 of which are Crown Victorias. He said officers are not expressing concerns about the Crown Victorias.

"This is a volatile issue," he said. "If there is any question in our minds about whether they are safe, we need to have that discussion and talk about what alternatives there are."

"We will drive any vehicle that they buy. We are not up here to stomp our feet, but I did want the deliberation to take place."

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Jail booking rift boils over between judge, Mansfield police

By **BILL TEETER**
and **MARK AGEE**

STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITERS

FORT WORTH — Mansfield Deputy Police Chief Sherman Baxter was found in contempt of court Tuesday by a Fort Worth municipal judge who said Baxter defied his instructions about keeping a log on prisoners.

Judge Brian Salvant said he has asked jail personnel to fill out a log meant to assure timely appearances before magistrates. The log notes the times when the judge asks to have prisoners brought in for a hearing and when the prisoner actually appears, Salvant said.

Baxter refused to comply, and after a long discussion Tuesday, Salvant declared Baxter to be in "constructive contempt," Salvant said. Baxter was not arrested and will have a hearing later, Salvant said.

Mansfield Police Chief Steve

JAIL A Fort Worth judge and Mansfield police officials argue about whether prisoners' rights are being disregarded during the booking process.

Noonkester said jail staff members are under his orders not to initial the log.

"We have not had any problems with any of the other magistrates down there," Noonkester said. "As I've told them before, all of these people, including Chief Baxter, work for me. If this magistrate wants to hold anybody in contempt of court, it should be me."

Fort Worth contracts with Mansfield for jail services. Officers first take prisoners to police headquarters at 350 W. Belknap St. There, the prisoners have an initial appearance before judges such as Salvant. They are then supposed to be

taken to the Mansfield Jail within a reasonable amount of time, Salvant said. Sometimes, prisoners are not moved as soon as they should be, and the log is a way of keeping jailers accountable and moving prisoners along, he said.

Baxter, who is in charge of the Mansfield Jail, confirmed

that the dispute with the judge was about the log, kept in a spiral-bound notebook.

"There's no problem with Fort Worth. This is all about one judge," Baxter said when reached at his home Tuesday night. "It's a totally bizarre episode."

Baxter said he refused to

have his workers fill out the log.

Salvant said he would not respond to what Noonkester and Baxter said.

He is trying to protect the rights of prisoners, he said.

When Salvant accepted the judge's post, "I swore that these people would be arraigned in a timely fashion," he said. "As the

judge, I cannot have city of Mansfield dictate to me when someone can be arraigned and when they can be transported. I have to stay independent of that."

Correspondent Robert Cadwallader
contributed to this report.

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Judge in inmate rift reassigned

COURTS A Fort Worth municipal judge says he still plans to pursue a contempt charge against a Mansfield deputy police chief despite being reassigned to another court.

By **SUSAN SCHROCK**
and **MARK AGEE**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITERS

The chief of Fort Worth's municipal courts reassigned a judge Wednesday, a day after the judge cited Mansfield's deputy police chief for contempt of court in a long-running dispute about the handling of Fort Worth jail inmates.

Earlier Tuesday, Deputy Police Chief Sherman Baxter, who was taken into custody briefly, ordered his staff to refuse to take prisoners to Judge Brian Salvant's courtroom.

Salvant "has threatened all my people at various times to hold them in contempt," Baxter said. "We are done doing business in his courtroom."

Chief Judge Ninfa Mares said she reassigned Salvant "to get the jail moving along."

"We needed to make a change," Mares said. "We have too many prisoners to process."

Fort Worth pays Mansfield
More on COURTS on 7B

for jail services. People who are arrested by Fort Worth police are first taken to police headquarters at 350 W. Belknap St. in downtown Fort Worth, where they have an initial hearing before a municipal judge. Then, they are transferred to the Mansfield Law Enforcement Center.

Salvant worked an evening shift as one of those judges. Another municipal judge will take over Salvant's shift, Mares said.

Salvant found Baxter in contempt of court Tuesday night after he refused to have his employees fill out a log that Salvant initiated to track how long it took jailers at the temporary holding facility to bring prisoners before his court.

Salvant said he was tracking times to show his supervisors that Mansfield jailers weren't promptly following his orders.

"That's exactly why they didn't want to do it," said Salvant, who said he was concerned that people were being held too long at the holding facility. Inmates get phone calls, food and medical care after they are transferred to the Mansfield Jail.

"Sometimes when you go out on a limb to protect the little guy, you get stuck out there all by yourself. And that's OK. I knew that," Salvant said.

Baxter said his jailers have their own record system and don't need another. Getting prisoners to a hearing quickly is also his staff's priority, but so too is safety, he said.

"We take them down [to see the judge] as quickly as possible," Baxter said. "I doubt real seriously it is ever longer than 15 minutes."

Baxter and Mansfield Police Chief Steven Noonkester said Tuesday that Salvant is the only judge with whom they've experienced problems.

Salvant said the 2 to 11 p.m. shift caused the tension. He said he would see 35 to 55

prisoners per night, while judges on the other shifts had a much lighter load.

"They don't have as much contact with the next judges as me," Salvant said.

Daniel Rodgers, a municipal judge whose responsibilities are the same as Salvant's, declined to comment on whether he had the same experiences as Salvant.

Noonkester was unavailable to comment on Salvant's reassignment.

Despite the new assignment, Salvant said he plans to pursue the contempt charge against Baxter.

Baxter's attorney, Bill Lane, who is also Mansfield's legal adviser, said he plans to file a writ of habeas corpus requesting a hearing on whether the charge would be legal.

Baxter was released on his own recognition without having to pay the \$100 bail.

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LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Sheriff's fantasy

I've thought these many months that Sheriff Dee Anderson was the best thing that's happened to Tarrant County in years.

Then comes his fantasy about Ford Expeditions, and down the drain he goes. (See Oct. 29 news story, "Crown Victoria purchase stalled as sheriff ponders options.")

Perhaps the sheriff would love to drive a Ford Expedition without paying the requisite \$30,000 to \$35,000. Let the taxpayers buy 21 of the luxury SUVs, and one could be assigned to him.

What's wrong with providing \$10,000 Chevy Cavaliers or similar models for public employees who need them, except for those who might engage in car chases? And the most inappropriate vehicle I can think of for a chase is a huge Ford Expedition.

The tempest over the hazards of driving Crown Victorias has been blown out of proportion, especially with the comments by County

Commissioners Marti Van-Ravenswaay and Dionne Bagsby.

I, too, do not believe that police officers should be exposed to unnecessary risks, but there may be no vehicle except a military tank that could provide complete protection to an occupant in a 70 or 80 mph rear-end collision.

Could we ask our county officials to get real?

Loyal Mayer, Haltom City

County to buy disputed vehicles

SAFETY Twenty-one Ford Crown Victoria patrol cars are on their way to Tarrant County despite concerns about safety.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

After a week of reflection but no public debate, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court narrowly voted to buy 21 Crown Victoria police cruisers for the Sheriff's Department, district attorney and area constables.

With no discussion, commissioners voted 3-2 Tuesday to purchase the vehicles, in which 14 police officers have died nationwide in rear-end crashes since 1983. Commissioners Dionne Bagsby and Marti VanRavenswaay voted no.

The quick vote came as a surprise because only a week ago, commissioners had tabled the issue to give Sheriff Dee Anderson time to research what other vehicles might be available.

Anderson had been expected to make a presentation at the commissioners' meeting Tuesday. Instead, the vote was

taken without Anderson being asked to present his findings.

Anderson said last week that he would prefer the county purchase Ford Expeditions, at least for patrol units.

After the vote Tuesday, Anderson said that he had not changed his mind about the Crown Victorias and that he wasn't upset about the lack of discussion.

"My position was I would rather be safe than sorry," he said. "They obviously thought this was the right thing to do."

Anderson and some other law enforcement officials nationwide are concerned about the safety

record of the Crown Victorias. The cruiser's gas tank has ruptured and caught fire in more than a dozen rear-end crashes nationwide, and a Dallas police officer was among those killed.

Ford officials say the vehicle is safe and that problems have been caused by the high-speed, rear-end crashes that police are exposed to.

Bagsby said after the meeting that the five members of the Commissioners Court "had to vote their own conscience."

"I am not comfortable that those vehicles are completely safe," she said. "My vote had to reflect that."

VanRavenswaay said she wasn't surprised by the vote.

"It wasn't unexpected from the comments stated previously," she

said. "There wasn't any additional information that would change anyone's opinion."

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, who has supported buying the Crown Victorias, said of the outcome: "I think we did the right thing."

"You would almost have to drive a Sherman tank to guarantee you're not going to have some explosion or fire," he said.

Johnson dismissed the purchase of other types of police vehicles, the possibilities of which ranged from smaller, front-wheel drive sedans to sport-utility vehicles.

"They're safer in these [Crown Victorias] than in some make-believe police car," said Johnson, who voted in favor of the purchase along with Commis-

sioner Glen Whitley and County Judge Tom Vandergriff.

Whitley said the price of the SUVs as well as their rollover risk concerned him.

"I don't want our guys to be in a vehicle that is going to roll over," he said.

Johnson said, however, that he came ready to debate the purchase with other county officials and that shutting out Anderson was not planned.

"It wasn't prearranged, I can assure you of that," Johnson said.

"I feel like the court made a good decision today," he said. "I hope we don't have any problems."

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Sheriff's vehicle hit; deputy OK

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

In a bizarre twist of timing, a Tarrant County sheriff's office Crown Victoria police cruiser was rear-ended by a pickup going 67 mph only 16 hours after commissioners voted 3-2 to buy 21 more of the vehicles.

The deputy, Larry Beuchaw, had minor injuries, and the car did not catch fire.

ACCIDENT The rear-end crash occurs just hours after commissioners voted to buy more Crown Victorias, whose safety has been questioned.

There have been nationwide safety concerns about the Crown Victoria police cruisers because 14 police officers have died since 1983 when rear-end crashes caused the

cruisers' fuel tanks to rupture and catch fire.

That safety record caused commissioners to disagree over whether the county should buy more of the popular rear-wheel-drive police sedans.

Several county officials said Wednesday that they thought the cruiser absorbed the impact well and protected the deputy, as it was designed to do.

"The car did great. I am impressed," said Joylee Moore, county fleet manager. "It was quite an impact, I understand."

Beuchaw was stopped on East Rendon-Crowley Road running radar about 3 a.m. Wednesday when officials said he clocked a Ford F-150 pickup at 67 mph in the 55-mph zone.

"He just sat there waiting for the truck to pass him so he could go after him," said Jay Six, chief deputy over the patrol division. "He sat there and watched the truck all the way into his trunk."

The driver, who has not been charged with any offense, told investigators that he had fallen asleep and "woke up just before he hit the squad car," Six said.

Investigators do not suspect that alcohol was a factor; the driver submitted to a blood alcohol test.

"The vehicle did exactly what it was supposed to do," Six said. "Cars are built with crumple zones to protect the passenger compartment. The rear end of the car is completely crumpled up, but the passenger compartment is unscathed."

The pickup's front bumper was higher than the Crown Victoria's rear bumper, which could have helped avoid a fuel-tank rupture. Three of the 14 fatal rear-end crashes involved pickups hitting cruisers, three others involved sport utility vehicles and one involved a van.

Beuchaw was released from the hospital Wednesday afternoon but was being monitored for a concussion, sheriff's officials said.

He was driving a 2003 Crown Victoria equipped with optional safety upgrades, including five shields in place to prevent a fuel-tank rupture.

Moore said all of the county's Crown Victorias have the safety shields.

Sheriff Dee Anderson had unsuccessfully lobbied for the county to buy Ford Expedition sport utility vehicles for patrol deputies.

Anderson said Wednesday that while he was relieved the deputy wasn't seriously injured, he believed the outcome does not affect the debate about the car's safety.

"I've had calls all day from people on both sides," Anderson said. "Some say it's vindication for the Crown Victoria because there was no fire

involved; others said we were just lucky it didn't happen.

"I don't have any interest in going back on that issue," he said. "We are driving the vehicles and will continue to drive them, and I'm just glad the deputy is going to be OK."

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, who voted in favor of buying more Crown Victorias, said that after reviewing the accident report, he was comfortable the commissioners had made "the right decision."

"I think our confidence in those Crown Victorias was justified by the accident that happened this morning," he said. "I believe Ford has corrected the problems.

"When a car is driving that fast and hits another car, anything can happen," he said. "We

don't know what would have happened if that had been an Expedition or Explorer."

Commissioner Marti Van Ravenswaay, who voted against the purchase, said she still believes her concerns are justified.

"I think we had a very fortunate outcome," she said. "Of course, there is no guarantee we will always be that fortunate.

"I don't feel like hindsight has given me any reason to change my vote."

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STAR-TELEGRAM/TOM PENNINGTON

Tarrant County Sheriff's Department mechanic Ralph Smith pries open the crushed trunk of a patrol car that was hit by a pickup Wednesday.

LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Star-Telegram | Thursday, November 6, 2003

Why Crown Vics?

I'm puzzled by the decision of Tarrant County commissioners to buy 21 Crown Victoria police cruisers despite safety concerns about the cars. (See Wednesday article.)

Why wouldn't the commissioners spend the time and money to find out which is the best vehicle for people who risk their lives for the rest of us? Why wouldn't they let Sheriff Dee Anderson present his research? Why such loyalty to the Crown Victoria?

This decision should be revisited, and the overriding question should be: "How much do we value our police officers?" We call them "heroes" until money is an issue.

Jane Ely, Fort Worth

Friday, November 7, 2003 | Star-Telegram



The Burlison American Legion post is suing Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson, challenging the seizure of its eight-liner machines.

STAR-TELEGRAM ARCHIVES

American Legion post fights for its eight-liners

By MAX B. BAKER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A Burleson American Legion post and its women's auxiliary are suing Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson, saying he improperly seized eight-liner machines it used for charitable fund raising.

The Johnson Mosely Post 549 states in its lawsuit that Anderson violated its members' state constitutional right to assemble as a private club when he and his deputies confiscated the machines during a raid Sept. 30.

John Gamboa, the attorney representing the American Legion, said the organization is asking state District Judge Dana Womack to issue a temporary injunction against the sheriff to keep him from harassing and seizing their property.

Gamboa said the lawsuit is being closely watched by the gaming industry following the Texas Supreme Court's ruling earlier this year that eight-liners that give cash, cash-equivalent coupons or prizes were illegal.

"It would throw havoc into the system," if the judge finds in the American Legion's favor, Gamboa said. "It will be a battle royal, everyone knows that. But that is what makes it fun."

Anderson, however, is confident that the machines were

GAMBLING The Burleson American Legion post is going to court with a new argument in hopes of keeping its gaming parlor open.

legally confiscated. Since the Supreme Court decision, and after a brief amnesty period, the Sheriff's Department has conducted two raids.

He said the gaming hall connected with the American Legion wasn't in Burleson, but on the far western edge of the county.

"They can assemble all they want. They just can't gamble," Anderson said.

In April, the state Supreme Court unanimously ruled that many of the casino-style eight-liner machines are illegal. Eight-liners are like slot machines in that players win if they match three icons vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

State law prohibits games of chance that pay winners prizes of value, but the law allows machines such as eight-liners to award gift certificates or tokens for inexpensive merchandise such as toys or novelties.

Gamboa would not discuss the details of his argument, but the lawsuit argues that the American Legion and its auxiliary — operating as a private club that is closed to the public

— should be allowed to use and enjoy the machines.

Julian Weisler, advocate general for the American Legion in Texas, said his organization has told posts that they "consider eight-liners to be illegal unless they are operated in strict compliance with the statute."

Anderson said that if Gamboa's argument is upheld, country clubs and other private organizations could open casinos and casino companies would be waiting in line to open similar, private clubs.

"If it is interpreted that way, there will be a lot of casinos opening up here," Anderson said. "I heard this argument when we were taking the machines out the front door."

Richard Davis, an Austin attorney who has been involved in several eight-liner cases, including the one that went before the Supreme Court, said he had not heard of the Burleson case or of Gamboa's new argument.

"The Texas statute on gambling as I read it does not really legalize any gambling except through pari-mutuel betting and regulated bingo," Davis said.

"I don't know how the machine is essential to their freedom of assembly."

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County to debate jail food contract

GOVERNMENT Tarrant County Commissioners could vote today on a new multimillion-dollar jail food service contract.

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Aramark Correctional Services is being recommended as the best choice for a controversial, multimillion-dollar contract to serve food in the Tarrant County Jail.

Two companies with ties to local law enforcement and county officials were among the bidders not recommended by the Tarrant County staff, officials said.

One of those companies — Mid-States Services, which holds the food contract until Dec. 31 — has been recommended as a “secondary” contractor to serve as a quick-switch backup if something goes wrong with the primary contract holder, said Jack Beacham, the county’s purchasing director.

County commissioners are scheduled to consider the contract at their regular meeting today and, despite the staff recommendation, could choose a different contractor, officials said.

Another bidder, Mid-America, is run by former Mid-States owner Jack Madera, whose business dealings with Dallas County Sheriff Jim Bowles have raised eyebrows.

A bid was also received from Canteen Correctional Services.

Estimates are that the Aramark bid would cost the county nearly \$3.3 million annually

More on GOVERNMENT on 7B

for an average jail population of 3,432 prisoners. A contract with Mid-States would cost nearly \$3.6 million, and one with Mid-America would cost more than \$3.6 million. Canteen’s bid would cost about \$3.4 million.

Aramark’s bid of 87.7 cents per meal undercut Mid-States’ bid, which was 95.6 cents per meal, according to county documents.

Canteen’s bid was 91.8 cents per meal and Mid-America’s was 96.5 cents per meal.

Scoring of the bids was based on examination of 34 criteria on which each company was tested, county officials said.

Secondary firms have been appointed in other county

contracts, but it would be a first for the jail food service contract, Beacham said. The secondary contractor is being proposed this time because few firms can provide jail food service, he said.

County officials — including Sheriff Dee Anderson and Commissioner J.D. Johnson — said they have socialized on occasion with Mid-States chief executive John Sammons and with Madera.

Anderson has said he considers both men friends, but that there is nothing improper about the bidding. Johnson has said that he has known Madera for at least 15 years, but that he will vote for the best deal for the county.

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County to reconsider bids for food service contract

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Tarrant County commissioners balked at hiring Aramark as the food service contractor for the county jail Tuesday after Sheriff Dee Anderson raised concerns about how the company came to be ranked as the top bidder.

A county staff committee had recommended Aramark for the multimillion contract, but commissioners said they had not seen individual company proposals.

Commissioners agreed to reconsider the issue at a future meeting, perhaps as early as Tuesday.

Anderson told commissioners that he was concerned that the cost of the contract counted for only 20 percent of the evaluation of the four companies that presented proposals.

Food and menu quality were not weighed heavily enough and neither he nor anyone else in the Sheriff's Department was allowed to contact vendor references, Anderson said.

Commissioner Glen Whitley and County Judge Tom Vandergriff voted in favor of hiring Aramark. Commissioners J.D. Johnson, Dionne Bagnby and Marti VanRavenswaay voted against the contract.

The companies competing for the contract are Aramark, current contractor Mid-States Services, Mid-America Services and Canteen Correctional Services.

The committee's evaluation process meant that Mid-States, which has a higher cost per meal, was selected as a backup vendor if the Aramark contract failed, Anderson said.

Whitley said he believes that Aramark is a good company that offers the lowest price.

"I think we should have taken the recommendation and gone ahead," he said Tuesday after the vote.

Anderson sent a letter to commissioners Monday detailing his concerns and saying that his department could not recommend Aramark. County Purchasing Director Jack Beacham defended the recommendation as the best deal for the county.

The county's contract with Mid-States will expire Dec. 31, and officials hope to have a new contract in place soon.

Aramark's bid would cost the county about \$3.3 million annually and Canteen's would cost about \$3.4 million. Mid-America and Mid-States would each cost about \$3.6 million.

According to the bid proposals, Aramark would serve food to inmates at a cost of 87.7 cents per meal, and Canteen would serve them for 91.8 cents per meal. Mid-States would serve at 95.6 cents per meal, and Mid-America would serve at 96.5 cents per meal.

After the meeting, Johnson said he believes that there was

GOVERNMENT

The Tarrant County Commissioners Court rejects a motion to enter into a new contract for meals at the jail.

too much of a price difference among the vendors. The low cost of Aramark's bid could mean there would be too few

employees, which could lead to problems, he said.

"Either two are too high or two are too low," Johnson said. "Somebody is cutting staff. To me, it just doesn't look right."

The county contract has been watched closely since questions were raised about possible friendships between some county officials and two of the bidders.

Anderson and others have said they have socialized on occasion with Jack Madera, owner of Mid-America, and John Sammons, chief executive of Mid-States. Madera and Sammons are former business partners turned bitter rivals. Madera is also an

acquaintance of Johnson.

Madera's business dealings with Dallas County Sheriff Jim Bowles have recently come under scrutiny.

Madera attended Tuesday's commissioners meeting and said questions about his business dealings may be affecting deliberations about the Tarrant County contract.

"If I were a commissioner, it would have an effect on me," he said.

Johnson, Anderson and Vandergriff said the relationships were not a factor in the decision to further discuss the contract.

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County may ask contractor to extend jail food service

By **BILL TEETER**

STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — A delay in approving a jail food-service contract might mean that county officials will have to ask the present contractor for an extension, Tarrant County officials said Wednesday.

That should not be a big problem if the contractor, Mid-

CONTRACT Tarrant County Commissioners are scheduled to consider the contract for jail food service again Tuesday.

States, agrees to the extension, said Jack Beacham, the county's purchasing director.

John Sammons, Mid-States'

chief executive, said he would require that the extension be for 90 days and he would reduce the per-meal cost he charges the county from \$1.04 to 95.6 cents, the cost he submitted in his bid for contract renewal.

That's higher than the 87.7-cent bid by competitor Aramark, which won a county committee's recommendation to take over the multimillion-dollar contract, and the 91.8-cent bid by Canteen Correctional Services.

At their meeting this week, commissioners delayed a vote on the recommendation to give the contract to Aramark.

They are scheduled to reconsider the contract Tuesday.

Contractors' bids were based on the 2003 fiscal year average monthly inmate population of the jail, which was 3,432. Each inmate eats 1,095 meals a year, according to jail figures.

Aramark's bid was \$3.3 million annually.

Sheriff Dee Anderson told commissioners that his department disagreed with the process used to come up with the top bidder. Cost was not given enough weight, nor were food service and quality considered carefully enough, he said, adding that he was bothered that neither he nor any of his staff members were allowed to check vendors' references.

Beacham said Wednesday

that he was mystified by Anderson's assertions. When the process began nearly a year ago, he said, commissioners decided that cost would account for only 20 percent among the factors considered, and the Sheriff's Department agreed to that.

The sheriff had also agreed that references would be contacted through the county's senior contract administrator, Beacham said.

Anderson said he has continually registered his concerns throughout the process and that his intention Tuesday was to alert the commission to his concerns.

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Edward W. Pischedda
1939 - 2003



Edward William Pischedda, 64, a retired public servant, died Monday, Nov. 24, 2003, in Arlington.

Memorial service: 7 p.m. Monday in the Chapel at Fielder Road Baptist Church, 1313 West Pioneer Parkway and South Fielder in southern Arlington; Dr. Gary Smith, pastor of Fielder Road Baptist Church, will officiate. Ed's body was donated to Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. Burial: His ashes will be interred at a later date.

Memorials: In lieu of flowers, the survivors ask that contributions be sent to the Trinity Kids Fund for Abused Children, c/o Fielder Road Baptist Church, 1323 West Pioneer Parkway, Arlington, Texas 76013 or to the River Legacy Foundation, 2111 North Collins Street, Suite 301 Arlington 76011.

Ed was born in Elizabeth, N.J. on Nov. 17, 1939, to Giovanni J. (John) Jr. and Catherine Heintz Pischedda, of Italy and of Elizabeth, N.J., respectively. He graduated from Westfield High School in Westfield, N.J. in 1957; that fall he began attending American University in Washington, D.C., the first in his family to attend college.

In 1961, Ed graduated from AU with a BA in economics and began his successful career with the US Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. In 1966 he went west and brought his young family to Irving and, in 1972, to Arlington. He continued this career with the Department of Labor, retiring in 1995 following numerous promotions.

Bored with retirement, Ed later resumed his career in public life. His last employer was the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, which he left in 2002. Ed was an enthusiastic member of Fielder Road Baptist Church.

Ed was preceded in death by his father in 1976, by his mother and by his half-sister, Rachel, both in 1994.

Survivors: Daughter, Suzanne Karen of Dallas; son, Edward Robert of Portland, Ore.; sisters, Eleanor Pischedda Wall of Linden, N.J., Carol Pischedda Genova of Fanwood, N.J. and Nancy Pischedda Cancellieri of Barnegat, N.J.; brothers, William James of Forked River, N.J. and Robert Paul of Toms River, N.J.; and by devoted friend Gladys (Liz) Jabalera and her children Mario, Jason and Emely, all of Arlington.

Friends don't let friends save \$1.5 million on jail food

Your tax dollars are at stake today in Tarrant County.

County commissioners face a \$1.5 million question. Do they:

Save money by hiring a big national company to feed jail inmates?

Or spend potentially \$1.5 million extra to hire one of two good local companies they already know well — politically, perhaps too well?

The winning bidder will get a \$3 million-plus annual contract to

serve more than 3,000 breakfasts, lunches and dinners every day for a year. The contract could be extended to five years, so the deal might cost us at least \$16.5 million, maybe as much as \$18 million.

Whether we pay \$16.5 million or \$18 million depends on how the county judge and four commissioners vote today.

With that much money going up for grabs this close to an elec-

tion year, it only figures that courthouse politics have erupted into a food fight.

The county number crunchers recommend buying the cheapest food.

That would be the 88-cent jailhouse happy meals promised by Aramark Correctional, a division of a Pennsylvania company that you might remember from a school or hospital cafeteria near you.

But the sheriff says Aramark's food isn't so hot — literally.

Three county commissioners voted last week to take a longer look at the more expensive bids from two local companies — two companies that also have closer political connections at the courthouse than Aramark does.

Mid-States Services of Hurst has been feeding our prisoners reliably and chumming up to county officials aggressively for 11 years, ever since the company

came to the rescue on short notice when another company was thrown out of the jail.

Mid-States is offering meals for less than 96 cents each. County managers recommended it if an Aramark deal doesn't work out.

The new Mid on the block is Mid-America Services of Dallas, founded by food-service executive Jack Madera of Kaufman County. That would be the same Jack Madera who gave meals and trips to the Dallas County sheriff, as reported by WFAA/Channel 8 and *The Dallas Morning News*.

Madera, 75, was the guy who ran that reliable food service and did all that chumming up at the Tarrant County courthouse back when he owned Mid-States. His new company is offering to feed Tarrant County prisoners for 96.5 cents per meal, the most pricey bid.

But Madera already won a contract fair and square to run the jailhouse snacks-and-sundries cart, the famous "banana wagon."

Both Mid-States and Mid-America have deservedly earned a lot of good friends at the courthouse.

But either food-service operation would cost taxpayers \$1.5 million more than Aramark over five years. That might be too much money to overlook, even among friends.

Aramark already has two votes. But it will need three today. Money-minded Commissioner Glen Whitley of Hurst, who represents Northeast Tarrant County, wanted to go along last week with a county administration screening committee that recommended hiring Aramark.

County Judge Tom Vandergriff of Arlington voted with Whitley. The same two voted for Aramark and lower costs the last time the contract came up, in 1998. They were outvoted then, too.

So nobody at the courthouse should have been too surprised last week when commissioners Dionne Bagsby of Fort Worth, Marti VanRavenswaay of Arlington and J.D. Johnson of rural

northwest Tarrant County vetoed the county managers' recommendation for Aramark.

Jack Beacham, the county purchasing director, stewed over the rejection.

"We've been playing this game for more than a year now," he told commissioners at that meeting after the bid-screening committee's work was discarded.

Sheriff Dee Anderson of Kennedale said he didn't like the way Aramark was chosen and doesn't want "problems with the food."

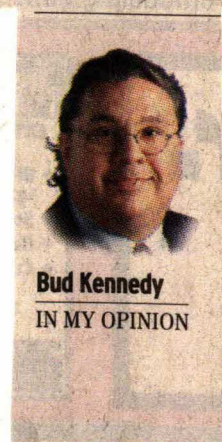
Bagsby, Johnson and VanRavenswaay all said they simply wanted to see all the other proposals and make up their own minds.

Johnson said Monday he wants to reject all of the bids for now.

Neither Bagsby nor VanRavenswaay returned phone calls.

I suppose they all made up their minds.

Bud Kennedy's column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.
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Bud Kennedy
IN MY OPINION

KENNEDY County commissioners can give a jail contract to a big national company, or to one of two local companies that they're chummy with but that will charge more.

Tarrant OKs jail food contract

By MAX B. BAKER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — After delaying the vote for one week to review contract proposals, Tarrant County commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to award the jail's controversial food service contract to the top-ranked bidder.

Aramark Correctional Services' bid of \$3.3 million to feed the jail inmates

JAIL Tarrant County commissioners vote to hire a food service provider for the jail.

will save the county an estimated \$600,000 over the current contract with Mid-States Services.

Mid-States, which bid \$3.6 million for the new contract, was selected as a secondary contractor to serve as a quick-switch backup if something

goes wrong with Aramark's services. Two other companies also sought to provide inmates' meals.

"We are confident that we can deliver to the taxpayers what they expect," said Mike Hudachek, a regional vice president for Aramark. "We are excited about the opportunity to serve Tarrant County."

Last week, commissioners balked at giving Aramark — the first choice

of an internal bid review committee — the multimillion-dollar contract after questions were raised about the selection process.

Commissioners, however, continued to express reservations about Aramark and the bid process before voting, saying the process was too confusing and the proposals too complicated to determine whether the county was getting a good deal.

Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said it might be necessary for Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson to hire a dietician or other food service specialist to ensure that Aramark meets the terms of the contract.

The contractor's bids were based on a 2003 monthly jail population of about 3,400 inmates. Each inmate eats 1,095 meals a year, records show.

"I'm in no way a food services guru," Bagsby said. "I have not advocated for anybody. I'm just advocating for fairness for everybody."

Commissioner I.D. Johnson labeled the bid proposals an "auditor's nightmare." He and other commissioners had questioned Aramark's bid of 87.7 cents per meal. Mid-State's bid was for 95.6 cents per meal.

Johnson said the process was so baffling that it was impossible to make comparisons.

"We need to provide clearly defined specifications," Johnson said.

Commissioners rejected his motion to approve a contract without a secondary provider as a backup.

Commissioner Glen Whitley said he found his colleagues' questions puzzling because they rarely dig into other, convoluted bid proposals that go through a similar process. He suggested they just didn't like the winner.

"How often do we ask these questions?" Whitley said. "They are a national company, they will do a good job, and they had the lowest bid."

He also pointed out that Aramark employs nearly 2,000 people in Tarrant County representing a \$15 million payroll. Its middle and upper management team is 25 percent minority or women, he said.

Anderson said he would live with the commissioner's decision after earlier raising questions about the bidding process, the costs per meal and the food and menu quality. Anderson said he might hire someone to oversee food services.

"They say they can do it," Anderson said. "I will expect them to do it. We'll require them to do it."

The sheriff disputed any sug-

gestion that Aramark was the unanimous selection of the review committee, which included Terry Grisham, the sheriff's executive director, and David Stromile, the chief deputy for confinement.

County Purchasing Director Jack Beacham said that while a formal vote was not taken, everyone signed off on the scoring and evaluation of the bids that led to Aramark being selected.

"If they had a problem, they should have said something then," Beacham said. "If you are going to appoint someone to a committee, you give them the power to make a decision."

Anderson and others have said they have socialized on occasion with Jack Madera, owner of Mid-America, one of the bidders, and John Sammons, chief execu-

tive of Mid-States.

Madera and Sammons are former business partners turned bitter rivals. Madera is also an acquaintance of Johnson's. Madera's business dealings with Dallas County Sheriff Jim Bowles have recently come under scrutiny.

Awarding of the Tarrant County contract came Tuesday amid a swirl of accusations about outdated food, county officials going on golf outings with company officials and commissioners' possible connections to some of the bidders.

Anderson said a packet of information distributed at last week's commissioners meeting raising some of those allegations has been turned over to the Tarrant County district attorney's office for review.

Ruby Marcille Berry



FORT WORTH — Ruby Marcille Berry, 71, a homemaker, went home with the Lord Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2003, in Fort Worth.

Funeral: 11 a.m. Monday at Rosemont Church of Christ in Fort Worth. Burial: Laurel Land Memorial Park in Fort Worth. Visitation: 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at Crosier-Pearson-Mayfield Funeral Home in Burleson, James Horton and Earl Griffin officiating.

"Nanny," as she was lovingly known, was born March 20, 1932, in Fort Worth to George and Maggie Smith. She attended Diamond Hill High School and graduated from Tech High School. She was employed by the Fort Worth Police Department and the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, retiring from both. She was preceded in death by her parents; her son, Jimmy Wayne Berry; brother, Wesley "Smitty" Smith; and great-granddaughter, Mary.

Survivors: Husband of 53 years, Frank; sons, David and Thomas Berry; daughters, Brenda Adams and husband, Dale, Ann Hughey and husband, Tim, Paula Tice and husband, Mike; brother, Paul Smith and wife, Shirley; sister, Reba Ann Berry and husband, Cecil; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Crosier-Pearson-Mayfield
12301 S. Freeway (817) 568-8836

Inquiry into jail contract widens

INVESTIGATION Tarrant County officials say there has been no irregularity in the way they do business with a jail vendor.

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
and KELLY MELHART
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITERS

Authorities investigating possible corruption in the Dallas County sheriff's office are seeking campaign finance records for several elected officials in Tarrant County, and a subpoena has been served at the Tarrant County sheriff's department, several sources told the *Star-Telegram*.

Sheriff Jim Bowles with thousands of dollars in favors before Bowles picked Mid-America for a \$20 million jail commissary contract.

Mid-America also operates the commissary at the Tarrant County Jail through a contract, awarded last summer, that is estimated to be worth between \$3 million and \$5 million.

In Denton County, Lucas said that the Mid-America commissary contract was recommended by a five-member committee of jail supervisors, of which he was not a part. The company offered the county the lowest commission during a bidding process, but it still won over the committee by saying it would guarantee annual profits of at least \$100,000.

Lucas said he relied on the committee's recommendation, instead of making the decision himself, because of the controversy brewing in Dallas County.

"I did not want to be a part of it," he said.

Denton County commissioners have also awarded Mid-America a \$950,000 contract to serve food to adult and juvenile inmates.

In Tarrant County, the serving of subpoenas for records does not mean that local officials are a target of the criminal investigation, several officials said.

One high-ranking local official, who requested anonymity because of a judge's order against discussing the subpoenas, said that investigators are looking for information to compare with the way Madera conducted business in Tarrant and Dallas counties.

Another official, Tarrant County District Attorney Tim Curry, said: "Just because someone gets copies of records, it doesn't mean they are a target."

Chris Milner, an assistant district attorney in Collin County, has been named as a special prosecutor in the investigation of Madera's relationship with Bowles.

That investigation has included a subpoena being served on the Tarrant County sheriff's

In addition, Denton County Sheriff Weldon Lucas said Thursday that his agency has been subpoenaed for records pertaining to a five-year jail commissary contract that was awarded to Mid-America Services of Dallas.

Mid-America is owned by Jack Madera, considered a friend by Lucas and by several Tarrant County officials, including members of the commissioners court.

The subpoenas — also served in Nueces County — are part of a widening investigation into whether Madera influenced Dallas County

department and subpoenas being issued for campaign finance records on several elected officials in Tarrant County, according to sources who requested anonymity.

A subpoena has also been issued for campaign reports on former Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, who served from 1993 to 2000.

The current sheriff, Dee Anderson, refused to confirm or deny that his department has been subpoenaed.

"On the advice of the DA, I'm not commenting on any possibilities," Anderson said.

Anderson said he recommended to Tarrant County commissioners that Madera's company get the new jail commissary contract only after Mid-America offered the best deal to the county — a minimum of \$62,500 each month.

"It is, to my knowledge, the most lucrative jail commissary in the state," Anderson said.

Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said that she knew nothing about a subpoena but that "somebody" asked for her campaign finance reports as long as six months ago, along with her travel itinerary.

Those records would not indicate any undue influence by Madera, VanRavenswaay said.

"He's been friendly to me — I've gone to lunch with him," she said, adding that Madera had picked up the tab each time but that they were at "very inexpensive" restaurants.

"I know he's been friendly to all of us," she said.

VanRavenswaay said she believed that Madera had picked up tabs for meals for other members of the commissioner's court.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said that he has been good friends with Madera for 15 years.

"If he's got the right contract, I'm going to vote for it," Johnson said. "If he does not, I'm going to vote against it."

This week, Tarrant County commissioners gave final approval to award a new jail food contract to another vendor, Aramark Correctional Services, passing over Madera's Mid-America and other companies.

Staff writer Max B. Baker contributed to this report.

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Glitch will cause some county workers to get 3 checks

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — About 1,100 Tarrant County employees will get supplemental checks this week because of a computer glitch that short-changed them on their regular paychecks or automatic deposits, officials said Thursday.

Some employees will get up to three checks to cover their full pay for the two-week period. Employees who worked during the Thanksgiving holiday were particularly affected by the glitch.

"We fully understand that this is the last weekend before Christmas, and we are working very hard to make sure they all

COUNTY Employees in the sheriff's department who worked overtime during the Thanksgiving holiday will get supplemental paychecks this week to correct a computer problem.

get paid," County Auditor Renee Tidwell said.

Last Friday, the computer server that prepares the payroll for the county's 4,000 employees broke down and had to be repaired because there was no backup hardware. The server was repaired by Monday afternoon, and other computers were configured to handle the payroll if the server crashed again. To make sure that the server was functioning and pay would be

distributed on time, the office staff processed the payroll a day early, County Administrator G.K. Maenius said.

After the payroll was processed, Tidwell said, the staff found that some hourly employees' checks or electronic deposits were too small. After fixing the problem and doing another payroll run, the staff found that about 375 sheriff's department employees were not being paid for Nov. 27 and 28, both county holidays, so additional checks were processed for them.

The server went online Oct. 1 as part of a major modernization project to increase the use of computers in administrative functions. The \$14.5 million

project is scheduled for completion in 2005.

Some departments reported few payroll problems. But at the sheriff's department, where between 500 and 700 employees were affected, administrators dropped normal duties to make sure the extra paychecks would be available and that

people on sick leave or vacation knew about the situation, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

"This is catastrophic. We have kind of had to cease normal operations as far as our command staff goes," Anderson said.

Anderson said he would have liked better results from

the new system, considering the expense involved.

Maenius said such problems are to be expected when new computer systems come online.

"This is a stabilization issue. This system has been extremely successful in its implementation," Maenius said.

ONLINE: www.tarrantcounty.com.

Audit questions jail commissary operation

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The Tarrant County Jail's commissary vendor missed about \$10,000 in commissions to the Sheriff's Department before auditors noticed that payments were falling short, according to an audit report released Friday.

The payments have since been made to the county by Mid-America Services, whose owner, Jack Madera, is at the center of an investigation of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department that has led to subpoenas for documents from Tarrant County.

The audit's findings were part of a routine review of the commissary operation for fiscal 2003, County Auditor Renee Tidwell said.

Other problems cited included pricing of items that was inconsistent with the

GOVERNMENT The Tarrant County auditor says that all problems revealed in the report have been corrected.

contract — inmates were charged too much or too little for items, for example — and allowing cash sales at the Cold Springs jail rather than deducting the purchases from the inmate accounts that are supervised by jail officials.

All of the problems have been corrected, Tidwell said.

"They were minor discrepancies," she said. "Procedures need to be enhanced."

Mid-America is a new contractor for the commissary, and the problems seemed to stem from the company and the county adjusting to the contract, she said.

Neither Sheriff Dee Anderson nor Madera returned tele-

phone calls seeking comment Friday night.

The jail commissary operates a cart, known as the "banana wagon," that sells snacks and toiletries to inmates.

The Sheriff's Department, which has oversight of the contract, is supposed to receive \$750,000 annually, or 27.5 percent of sales, under the terms of the contract signed in April.

The report said that some commissary prices were higher and others were lower than the rates agreed to in the contract. The auditor's office recommended that Anderson and Mid-America review and adjust the pricing, which has been completed, Tidwell said.

The audit found that about \$7,190 in commissions for July sales were never paid to the Sheriff's Department. Jail offi-

cials recalculated the commission payments, and a check for \$8,289 was sent to the department, officials said.

Cash sales have been discontinued. An additional \$2,356 in payments were made by Mid-America to the Sheriff's Department for commissions earned on weekend cash sales at the Cold Springs facility, according to the report.

A special prosecutor for Dallas County is investigating allegations that Madera may have unduly influenced the sheriff there with gifts and favors. Subpoenas have been delivered to Tarrant County seeking campaign finance records for some past and current elected officials and for some jail records.

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E. A. "ZEKE" MEDLIN III
1935-2003

E A Zeke" Medlin III, 68, a beloved husband father and grandfather, passed away Saturday, December 20, 2003, at his home.

Funeral: 3:30 p.m., Monday at Laurel Land Memorial Chapel.
Burial: Laurel Land Memorial Park.

Memorials: Humane Society of North Texas or the American Cancer Society.

Born January 6, 1935, in Fort Smith, Arkansas he had been a resident of Fort Worth the past 40 years. Mr. Medlin was retired from American General Insurance Company. Zeke and his wife, Elois, celebrated their golden wedding anniversary May 29, 2003.

The family wishes to express its appreciation for the loving care given by Community Hospice of Texas.

Survivors: Loving wife, Elois Medlin; daughter, Pam and her husband, Gary; Son, Kevin and wife, Pam; grandchildren Elizabeth, Katherine, and Scott; Brothers, Robert, Curtis, and David; and, sister, Helen.

Raid shuts down game room in southeast Tarrant County

By BILL TEETER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Ninety-six game devices, including eight-liners and slot machines, were confiscated from a Mansfield Highway business Thursday by the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department after undercover officers reported seeing gambling.

The machines and some cash were taken from the Pot of Gold Gameroom, and the owner, Mike Long, was given a citation accusing him of promoting gambling,

GAMBLING

Sheriff's personnel close an eight-liner operation on Mansfield Highway.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

Thirty-three people who were playing the machines when the raid began received Class C misdemeanor citations.

Long said that his operation is legal because he makes patrons "independent contractors" of his business and that the real crime was for officers to raid his game room, housed in a 2-story metal

building at 7204 Mansfield Highway.

"This is a dictatorship. This is a move toward a communistic society. This is bull," said Long, 48.

Authorities who reviewed Long's method of operation decided otherwise, Anderson said.

"We definitely have a different opinion about it, the DA has a different opinion about it, and the judge that signed the warrant has a different opinion about it,"

More on GAMBLING on 5B



Game room owner Mike Long said, "This is a move toward a communistic society."

GAMBLING

Continued from 1B

Anderson said. "It's gambling, pure and simple."

The gambling promotion change is punishable by a year in jail and a maximum fine of \$4,000. The patrons' citations could result in maximum fines of \$500 each, according to the state penal code.

The raid was the third on a Tarrant County location by the Sheriff's Department since the Texas Supreme Court ruled that eight-liners that give cash, cash-equivalent certificates or prizes worth more than \$5 are illegal gambling devices.

Eight-liners are electronic machines, similar to slot machines, in which the player inserts money and hopes to match pictures in rows running eight down, eight across or eight diagonally.

The undercover officers reported that at Pot of Gold, players who signed up as what Long called independent contractors could earn points on an eight-liner equivalent to hundreds of dollars. Then, with money from the game room, the players

would go to a store to purchase an item for \$5 or less, return with the receipt and be paid the rest of their winnings in cash on the premise that they had become employees of the game room, Anderson said.

Regular slot machines were also found at the Pot of Gold. Long said the slot machines were legally operated because they paid in points that could be redeemed for low-cost items that fit state legal guidelines.

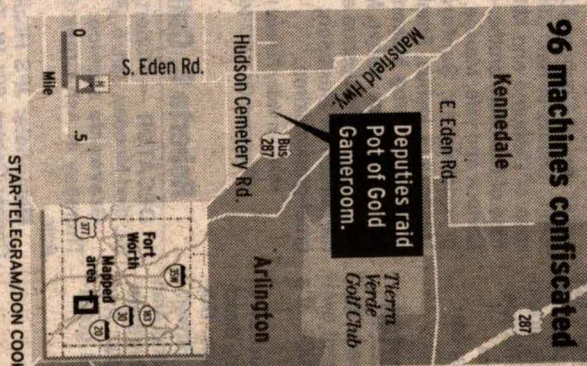
The sheriff said he is unsure of the legal status of the slot machines, but he believes their presence simply supports authorities' belief that Pot of Gold is a gambling establishment.

Eight-liner halls are expensive to operate, and the machines cost \$2,500 and more each to purchase, Anderson said. It is impossible to run one within the law and make a profit, he said.

The Supreme Court's action last spring led to the closing of 90 percent of the locations in the county, Anderson said. Eventually, the law will catch up with all of the remaining operators, he said.

"I'd like this to be the last one, but I know of three or four others," he said.

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STAR-TELEGRAM/DON COOK

96 machines confiscated



STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Las Vegas-style slot machines were among the gaming devices confiscated at the Pot of Gold Gameroom.

Sheriff hopes to add jail needs to bond plan

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Last weekend, the Tarrant County jail population passed 3,600 for the first time since Sheriff Dee Anderson took office three years ago.

By 2015, Tarrant County will need 1,200 more jail beds if the inmate population continues to increase, Anderson said Tuesday.

The most pressing need is for 400 "super-maximum" beds to hold the most dangerous prisoners, the sheriff said.

Anderson hopes that a new jail will be included in a bond package that so far totals \$93 million, including \$48 million for a civil courts building, \$25 million for expanding of the Juvenile Services Center and \$20 million for renovation and expansion of buildings for the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office.

A proposal for the cost and details of a new jail have not been put together. But "This bond project is crucial to Tarrant County as far as confinement is concerned," Anderson said.

Jail crowding is caused in part by the area's continued population

GOVERNMENT

County commissioners and administrators discuss bond proposals that may be taken to the voters this year.

growth, but it is exacerbated when the state prison system does not transfer inmates from jail to prison promptly, he said.

Any jail expansion would be phased in over a number of years, he said.

Commissioners heard a presentation about the bond package Tuesday. The proposals and costs are preliminary and probably will be amended before voter approval is sought, possibly in late summer or fall, County Administrator G.K. Maenius said.

His office is studying how much the county can borrow without forcing an increase in the property tax rate, currently 25.27 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, he said.

The civil courts building proposal calls for a 5-story building east of the old courthouse. The new building would accommodate as many as 12 civil district courts and be built to take care of needs specific to civil litiga-

tion, such as trials with several parties and multiple lawyers.

The expansion of the juvenile services campus would include construction of a 35,000-square-foot alternative school, additional administrative and support services offices, and an additional courtroom.

The Kimbo Road center has four courtrooms.

Ninety-six detention beds would be built, according to the proposal.

The alternative school is now in leased space at another location that presents security and other difficulties, the proposal said.

The medical examiner's proposal includes a request for a 3-story administration building totaling 58,260 square feet west of the existing office at 200 Feliks Gwozdz Place.

The present headquarters is a 27,248-square-foot building that was built in 1986.

It won't work to build more floors onto the existing building, said Dr. Nannepaga Zachariah, technical and administrative director for the medical examiner. Sensitive and hard-to-move laboratory operations in the old building would have to be moved out to

protect them from construction vibrations and set up temporarily at another location. They would have to be moved back when the work is complete, he said.

"There would be a vibration that could even destroy some of the equipment," Zachariah said. You would have to rebuild the lab somewhere else and then bring it back."

Pct. 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson suggested merging city and county crime labs for a cost savings. Pct. 1 Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said she wanted to see money used on the Resource Connection, a county center for community services.

Pct. 3 Commissioner Glen Whitley said he wanted to see some money used for transportation projects. He also said that he preferred the new jail be built somewhere other than downtown because of business developments going in.

Anderson said after the meeting that he preferred that the new jail be built downtown but that he would accept what the commissioners decide.

Good out of tragedy

By DEE ANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

On Wednesday, the Federal Communications Commission will visit our neighbors in San Antonio for a hearing on the state of local broadcast in Texas.

The commission will hear comments from broadcasters, community groups and public officials on how well Texas' radio and television stations serve the needs of their communities.

Having been in law enforcement for 24 years, I have always believed that cooperation between the local broadcast media and law enforcement can be invaluable in helping to solve and prevent crimes.

In North Texas, we are fortunate to be served by a corps of local radio and television stations that routinely assist law enforcement by airing crucial and timely information.

The immediacy with which radio and TV can deliver a message to the public, coupled with the fact that radio and television signals serve geographically discrete areas, makes broadcasting an ideal partner for law enforcement and public safety.

The shining example of cooperation between the law enforcement and broadcast communities continues to be a program developed in the Metroplex: the Amber Alert system.

It is a testament to Amber Hagerman, a 9-year old girl who was kidnapped and murdered in 1996 in Arlington. The name of the national program also serves as an acronym standing for "America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response."

When Amber was abducted, I was public information officer for the Arlington Police Department. Amber's tragic death had such a profound impact on our community and North Texas that it prompted regional law enforcement agencies and the Dallas/Fort Worth Association of Radio Managers to develop an innovative emergency alert plan to help recover abducted children.

When an Amber Alert is issued,

MEDIA Looking to prove the importance of local broadcasting? Seek no further than the Amber Alert program.

area radio and television stations interrupt programming to broadcast information about an abducted child and any available information on a suspect.

For the broadcasters involved, the Amber system is purely voluntary, and radio and television stations' participation is done as a public service. In fact, the program's development was driven in large part by radio broadcasters in this area who wanted to see some good come from the horrific events surrounding Amber's death.

These station managers worked tirelessly alongside me and my law enforcement colleagues as we endeavored to make the program a model for the nation.

Today, hundreds of states, regions and communities nationwide have followed Texas broadcasters' lead by developing and implementing their own Amber plans.

The system is credited with the recovery of more than a hundred children nationwide — 23 here in Texas. One cannot put a price on the life of a child. Every recovery means the world to the families of the children rescued.

The Amber Alert system is a strong example of how good can come from even the most tragic events. By mobilizing law enforcement, broadcasters and ordinary citizens to pull together, the Amber Hagerman tragedy has been responsible for saving many lives. The system is also a strong example of local broadcasters cooperating with law enforcement to serve local communities.

As the FCC begins its proceedings on Texas broadcasting, I would recommend to them the Amber Alert system as an example of local broadcasting at its best.

Dee Anderson is sheriff of Tarrant County.

Delays in inmate transfers cost county money

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A backlog of inmates awaiting transfer to state prison is costing Tarrant County thousands of dollars per year in extra jail costs and adding to



ANDERSON

jail population increases, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

The average number of days in which inmates stay in the Tarrant County Jail after their files have been accepted by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice has grown from 22 to 34 days since January 2001, when Anderson took office.

After costs for medical needs, staff, meals and other incidentals of jail life are added up, it costs at least \$50 per day to keep a prisoner in the jail, Anderson said.

The slow state pickups are also driving up the daily jail population, Anderson said.

"We need to get it as low as we can go," Anderson said. "Even in the best of times, it was 15 to 20 days. I think that's what people accept."

As of Friday, the population of the Tarrant County jails stood at 3,593 inmates.

Though within jail standards and not a record, the number is troubling, Anderson said. Last month, the population broke 3,600 for the first time since he became sheriff.

Anderson said he does not want to see a repeat of the situation of 12 years ago, when prison overcrowding caused county jails to hold some 15,000 prison-ready inmates.

JUSTICE The county's jail space concerns are heightened by slower acceptance of Tarrant County prisoners by the state, Sheriff Dee Anderson says.

A massive state prison building program seemed to solve the problem for a time, Anderson said.

He said he believes that a new shortage of state prison space may be causing the latest backup.

Mike Viesca, a spokesman for the state Criminal Justice Department, said that the state prisons are not crowded and that the state pickup of prisoners is about average.

"We have consistently been able to receive offenders within the mid- to upper-20-day range from the time we receive the offender's complete paperwork," Viesca said. "Those numbers occasionally fluctuate, but we certainly stay below the 45 days allowed by

law."

The prison system is holding about 148,000 people and has room for more, Viesca said.

"The Texas prison system currently has enough space for all who need to be incarcerated," he said.

Anderson said the state has 45 days to pick up a prisoner after accepting paperwork telling officials that a convicted inmate is ready to be moved from the county to a state prison facility, Anderson said.

On the 46th day, the county starts to charge the state lodging costs, he said.

The state is charged \$45 per day for any prisoners held over, he said.

About 250 prisoners are awaiting transfer to the state prison system, Executive Chief Deputy Bob Knowles said.

Brazos County Sheriff Chris Kirk, who serves as chairman of the legislative committee for the Sheriff's Association of Texas, said that other sheriffs have raised concerns and that the organization is considering asking the next Legislature to consider restricting the length of stays for prisoners awaiting transfer from local jails.

Kirk said the average stay of state inmates does not appear to be growing at his jail, but, at about 26 days, is longer than he would like.

Tarrant County operates four jails: a high-security facility downtown near the Tarrant County Justice Center, one lockup in the the Fort Worth police station, the medium-security Green Bay facility and minimum-security Cold Springs unit.

Total capacity is 4,044 inmates, and an additional 525 beds are planned for the medium-security Green Bay facility. The county will need 1,200 more beds by 2015, Anderson said.

The county is studying building an additional jail in a proposed bond issue that may be presented to voters in late summer or fall.

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8-liner operator sues to recover seized machines

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The operators of an eight-liner hall shut down in a Jan. 8 raid filed a lawsuit Thursday seeking unspecified damages from the Sheriff's Department and the return of more than 100 gaming machines and \$27,000 in cash seized in the operation.

Sheriff Dee Anderson and others in his department are named as defendants in the suit, which alleges that investigators did not properly examine the operating methods used by the Pot of Gold game room. That failure, the suit states, led to a flawed search warrant, raid and seizure of the machines.

COURTS The owner of the Pot of Gold says his game room legitimately got around state gambling laws by making players "independent contractors."

The seizure could cost the business as much as \$3 million in 2004, court papers said. The game room was making money honestly and employed 16 people who lost their jobs when it was shut down, the suit states.

Mike Long, the Pot of Gold's owner, said investigators sought to destroy his business rather than do meaningful law enforcement.

"They wanted to crush, kill
More on COURTS on 7B

and destroy me while I was trying to run a business," Long said.

Anderson said that he is not concerned about the suit and that his investigators accurately determined that state gambling laws were violated at the Pot of Gold.

No charges have been filed against Long or others involved with the business, but the district attorney's office is reviewing the case.

Since the raid, the Pot of Gold has filed an unsuccessful motion to get the machines returned, Anderson said.

"This is a logical next step, and I would expect them to have as much success as they did with the first try," Anderson said. "Anyone who looks at the machines can see they were gambling machines."

The Pot of Gold, at 7204 Mansfield Highway, operated 112 gaming machines. A search warrant affidavit indicated that it was raided after undercover sheriff's investigators saw gambling law violations, including points that equaled values more than 10 times the amount inserted into the machines. They also reported receiving cash amounts of more than \$5, according to affidavits.

Most of the machines were eight-liners, but a few were slot machines. Texas law allows the operation of gaming machines as long as winnings are limited to items costing \$5 or less, or no more than 10 times the amount of money inserted into the machine, up to \$5. Cash prizes are



LONG

not allowed.

The machines are called eight-liners because the player wins points by lining up three icons horizontally, vertically or diagonally on a screen that allows eight ways to win.

Under the game room's operation, players could sign on as "independent contractors" to become employees of the business, Long said. When they accumulated enough points for a prize, the Pot of Gold gave them cash to purchase an item

for \$5 or less and return the receipt to the Pot of Gold, Long said.

Because they were employees instead of customers, they were not breaking the law by receiving money, Long said.

Long attempted to communicate with the Sheriff's Department and county officials to make sure the Pot of Gold was operating legally, said Long's attorney, Don McDaniel.

But those efforts attracted an investigation instead of advice about how to operate within the law, he said.

"There we were, saying, 'Help us,' and they said, 'Aha, you are in violation of the law,'" McDaniel said.

Anderson said he did not consider the independent contractor method a legitimate loophole in the gaming laws. About the game room's attempts to consult with law enforcement officials before the raid, Anderson said the game room had been advised to consult state law and follow it.

"What we advised them is the same thing everyone is: Follow the law, operate legally," Anderson said.

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Saturday, February 7, 2004

Cheers & Jeers

Cheers: To officers of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department for the prompt and caring response to our call for help when a homeless, abused woman knocked on our door recently to seek help. The kindly manner in which she was treated and the subsequent help she has been given are commendable.

Jean Thomas, Fort Worth

FORT WORTH AREA Briefs

FORT WORTH

Friday, February 13, 2004

Deputies looking for seat-belt offenders

Through Thursday, extra Tarrant County sheriff's deputies will be on special patrol looking for motorists not wearing seat belts or using child safety seats as mandated by state law.

The program will also target speeders, the news release said.

The campaign is part of a coordinated effort among the county and city police agencies and with the Texas Department of Transportation and the National Highway Transportation Administration. A grant is paying the cost of overtime for the deputies, Sheriff Dee Anderson said.

Texas law requires all front-seat passengers to wear seat belts. All auto or truck occupants younger than 17 must be belted when sitting anywhere in the vehicle. All children 4 or younger or less than 36 inches tall must be in child-safety seats.

UPDATE

Deputy says he accepts job's perils



Tarrant County Sheriff's Deputy Mike Tatsch has returned to full duty after being shot last year.

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — It was a visit the 27-year-old Hillsboro parolee wasn't expecting.

One minute the man was sitting in a small room at the Texas parole office in south Fort Worth. The next, Tarrant County Sheriff's Deputy Mike

RECOVERY A Tarrant County sheriff's deputy shot in September while trying to arrest a man on a drug warrant is back on the street.

Tatsch, a brawny man with a military haircut, was standing in the doorway, blocking the

only way out.

The man, wanted on a parole violation warrant, was quickly handcuffed and loaded into the back of Tatsch's car. He was then whisked to the parking lot of a grocery store at Interstate 35W and Berry Street, where he was placed

More on RECOVERY on 8B

RECOVERY

Continued from 1B

into a van for fugitives destined for the Tarrant County Jail.

"This one is like the best of them," Tatsch said, typing a report about the arrest on a computer in his car. "When you can arrest and transport someone without incident, that's the best way that it can happen."

Tatsch knows one of the worst ways. It happened to him Sept. 12.

It's been five months since the deputy kicked open the bedroom door of a southwest Fort Worth apartment to arrest a man wanted on a drug warrant, only to be greeted by gunfire.

The first shot sliced through Tatsch's abdomen, entering just to the left of his navel and traveling to the right.

He said he and other deputies returned fire, shooting the man, Korey Demaine Walker, several times.

Tatsch, a 10-year veteran of the department, was in the hospital nine days, then was sent home to recover. He returned to light duty in November and to full duty with the fugitive unit in December.

Walker also survived and was indicted in December on charges of attempted capital murder, aggravated assault

with a deadly weapon and two charges of possession of a controlled substance. The cases have not gone to trial.

Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson said that while a detailed review of the shooting will be conducted after the trial, an internal investigation and an investigation by the Fort Worth Police Department's major-crimes unit did not raise any major issues concerning how the arrest went down.

"We felt both the criminal and internal investigation showed that not only did they act appropriately, but they acted heroically," Anderson said.

Walker had been wanted for more than a year on a warrant accusing him of possession of a controlled substance.

The night before the shooting, Tatsch learned that the man was staying at the Enclave at City View apartments, 5401 Overton Ridge Blvd.

Officers began watching the apartment early Sept. 12, but Walker did not emerge. Officers then knocked on the door and announced they were there to serve a warrant, but Walker refused to come out or let police in, officials have said.

The deputies forced their way into the apartment. Tatsch had just kicked open a locked bedroom door when the shootout occurred.

"He charged into the living room. When he finally went down, it was between me and the [front] door," Tatsch said. "After the shooting had stopped and he was down, I stepped over him, walked outside, sat down on the steps there and found my injury and waited."

"I didn't want anyone to touch me. I focused on just maintaining and my wife. You've got to think about that."

Anderson said the Fort Worth police investigation revealed that Walker had made several cellphone calls telling people that he would not be taken alive.

"It validated our stance that he knew who [the deputies] were," Anderson said. "He told several people that the law enforcement people were there to arrest him and he wasn't going back to prison. They would have to kill him."

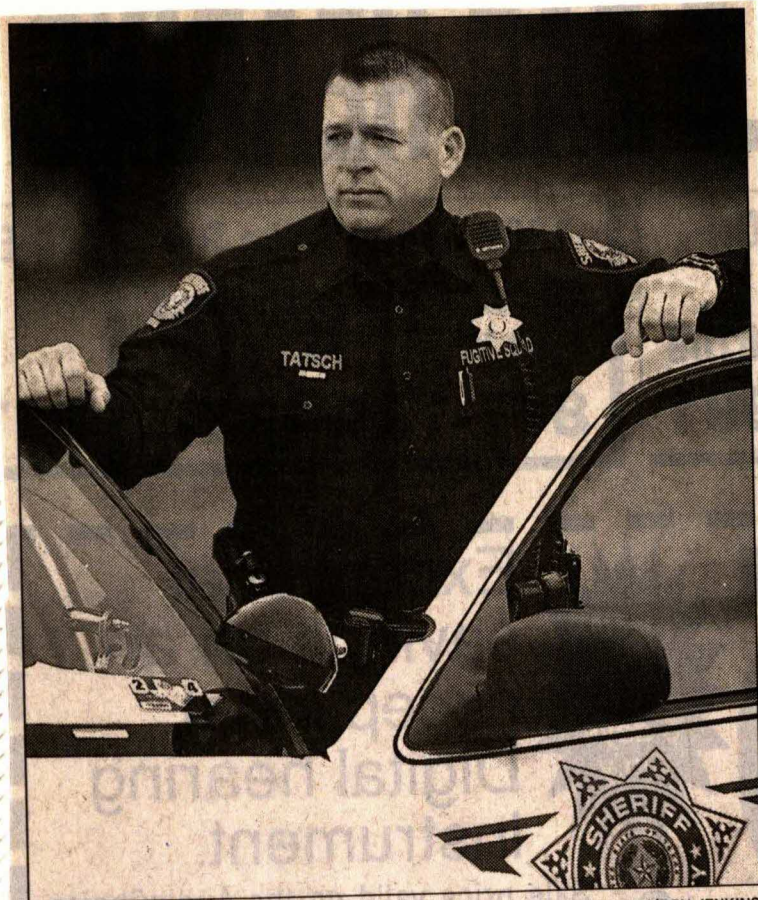
Tatsch said he rarely thinks about the man accused of shooting him, nor does he harbor ill will against him.

"My job with him is done except for court now," Tatsch said.

"It's not up to me. There's courts that have to deal with it, and I believe that there's a higher person than that that he's going to have to answer to."

While mentally Tatsch has moved on, there are still permanent reminders of the ordeal — the entry and exit wounds and surgery scars on his abdomen, and the permanent numbness in his right leg, a result of the bullet traveling through his pelvis and tearing through part of his gluteus muscle.

In the console of his patrol car, Tatsch still has the handcuffs he had worn in a pouch on his belt that day. One of the handcuffs no longer latches properly, the steel apparently bent when his belt prevented the bullet from exiting his right side.



STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Since returning to duty, Tarrant County Sheriff's Deputy Mike Tatsch has made one change: He now wears a bulletproof vest.

Tatsch said the dangers are just part of his job.

"The people that we're sometimes looking for will do everything they can to get away, whether it's run, fight, hide, whatever," Tatsch said. "So we take all the precautions we can to minimize the danger."

Tatsch said he had no reservations about returning to work.

Kristie Tatsch, his wife, said: "He was so adamant about going back. There was no question. I never even asked if he was going back. That was just a given. That's what he did, and he was good at it."

Fellow officers involved in the shootout said they, too, felt no fear about returning to their jobs.

Sgt. Paul White said that within days of the shooting, officers with the fugitive unit found themselves once again trying to arrest a man who refused to come out of his home.

"I asked the boys, 'Do you want to do this right now?'" White said. "They said, 'Let's do it.' We went in and arrested the young man who refused to answer the door."

Deputy Timothy Pickle said responding to a similar situation so soon after the shooting "is therapy."

"Fall off the horse, get back on it," Pickle said.

Tatsch has made one change since returning to his job.

Despite earlier reports to the contrary, the deputy wasn't wearing a bulletproof vest on the day of the shooting. He said, however, that the bullet struck him in an area that would not have been protected by the vest anyway.

Tatsch said he now wears a vest, which is optional equipment at the department, all the time while on duty.

"For one, it's the smart thing to do, and two, for my wife," Tatsch said. "She went through this thing, and it might have been harder on her than it was on me."

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Get it right or get out, jail food service told



Plenty of spaghetti is available as Aramark workers prepare dinner Tuesday. However, inmates say the problem with the jail food is quality, not quantity.

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Tarrant County commissioners warned the new jail food contractor Tuesday to improve service or be replaced, after a deluge of complaints about rancid food, unsanitary conditions and substandard offerings.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said Tarrant County inmates have bordered on revolt since shortly after Aramark Correctional Services took over jail food services in December.

At the medium-security Green Bay jail recently, about 130 inmates refused a meal because the quality was so bad, officials said.

An Aramark official said Tuesday that the company is providing meals that meet the terms of its contract.

"We feel confident that we have met our obligations and will continue to do so," company spokeswoman Debbie Albert said.

She said Aramark will not comment further until managers can review a letter from the county detailing the complaints.

More on JAIL on I1B

On Tuesday, commissioners voted unanimously to give Aramark 30 days to fix the problems and improve the food quality. Precinct 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson was absent for the vote.

Under the terms of its \$3.3 million contract to provide food at the downtown jail and three other lockups, Aramark can be replaced by bidder Mid-State Services if it fails to fulfill the contract terms. Mid-States held the contract before losing out to Aramark in the recent bidding.

County Purchasing Director Jack Beacham said Tuesday that jail administrators and county officials found the inmates' complaints to be valid.

"Last Tuesday after Commissioners Court, I went down to the Green Bay facility," Beacham said Tuesday. "There were 17 pans of pinto beans

that had soured. We spit them out when we tried them.

"I had to take the suit I was wearing to the cleaners at the end of the day because you could still smell the spoiled beans in it. It was bad."

Some inmates have been refusing the jail food and eating whatever they can purchase off the commissary cart, known as the "banana wagon," he said.

Beacham said he saw one Aramark employee spill a batch of flour tortillas onto the serving area floor and then put them back into the food service line.

Foods were also found to be at improper temperatures, Beacham said. Items such as rice and sloppy Joe mix should be maintained at temperatures of 120 to 150 degrees, but recent checks found rice on serving trays at 89 degrees and sloppy Joe mix at 90 degrees, he said.

Inmates have also complained about bland food and lack of variety, with rice and beans being served repeatedly, Beacham said.

All those complaints indicate contract violations, he said.

"We don't feel like we've gotten the value for what we are paying them," he said.

Aramark handles food service for about 490 jail facilities nationwide, including lockups in Lubbock and Bexar counties, officials said.

Lubbock County Sheriff David Gutierrez said Tuesday that Aramark has provided food service there for 10 years,

with no significant problems. Bexar County officials did not return a telephone call seeking a comment.

Under the Tarrant County contract, Aramark is required to provide three meals daily to about 3,500 inmates.

Aramark's bid was about \$600,000 lower than the previous contract with Mid-States and was based on a charge of 87.7 cents per meal. Mid-States' bid was 95.6 cents per meal.

When the contract was awarded, some commissioners questioned whether Aramark could deliver quality service at the low price.

Precinct 3 Commissioner Glen Whitley said Tuesday that Aramark will be replaced unless its service improves.

"I think the sheriff put it very succinctly," Whitley said. "Aramark is a national compa-

ny, and they have to get this problem fixed."

Precinct 2 Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said county officials have met recently with the company to no avail.

"I believe we were put in this situation because we had tried everything else," she said. "There had been several meetings to discuss the food."

VanRavenswaay said the company assured officials that it could live up to its contract.

"It was a very detailed bid," she said. "It was carefully evaluated. I recall that the purchasing agent feared they might not be able to live up to the bid."

"It was the lowest bid, and there was everything in writing that said they could do it."

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"There were 17 pans of pinto beans that had soured. We spit them out when we tried them."

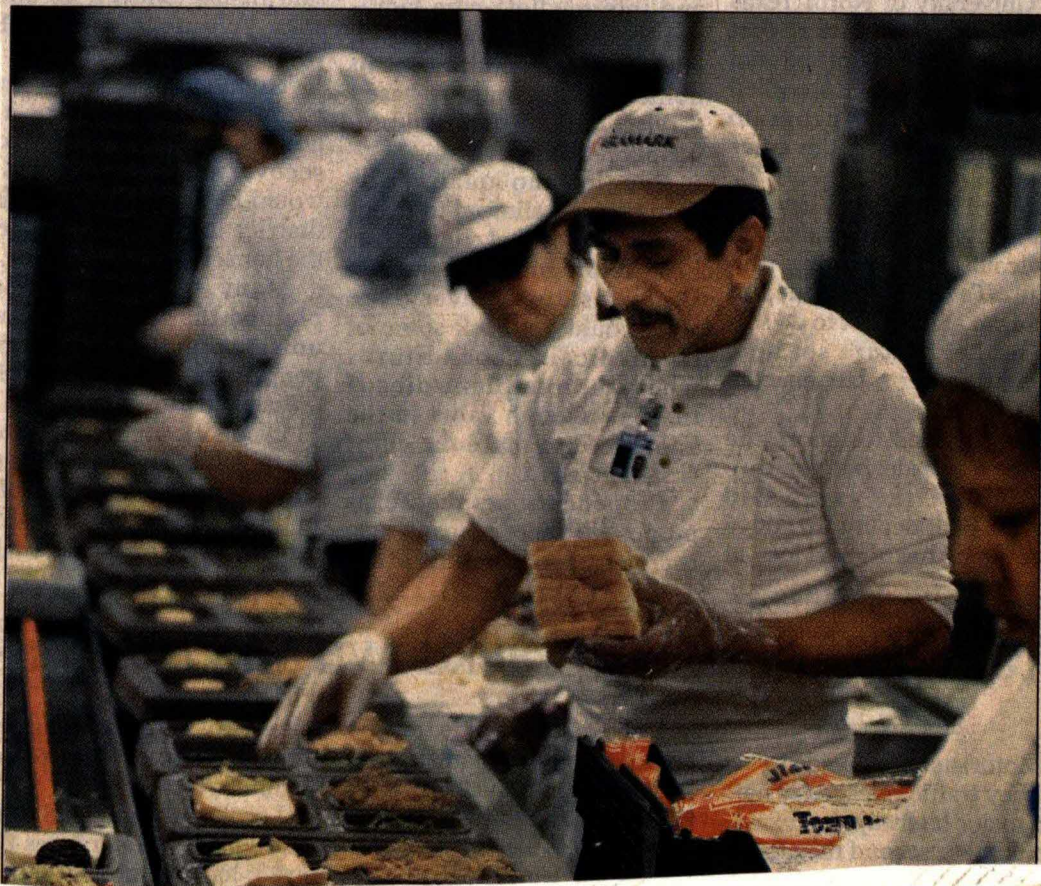
— Jack Beacham, county purchasing director



STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

As a trusty mops the kitchen, Aramark employee Joe Jones mixes salad for dinner at Tarrant County Jail.

Aramark has 30 days to cook up solutions to problems that have inmates refusing meals



STAR-TELEGRAM/RON T. ENNIS

Dinner trays go down an assembly line before the evening meal Tuesday at Tarrant County Jail. Inmates have complained about the jail food since a new service took over.

EDITORIALS

Jailhouse food blues

It would be easy to dismiss inmates' complaints about jail food simply as whining — not worthy of serious attention because incarceration is not meant to be a pleasant experience.

But in the case of the Tarrant County Jail and the meals being served by its newly contracted food service provider, Aramark Correctional Services, the food being distributed to prisoners not only does not meet the taste test — it may actually pose health risks.

Inmates have been complaining about the quality of the food since Aramark began serving the county's four jail sites in December under a \$3.3 million annual contract.

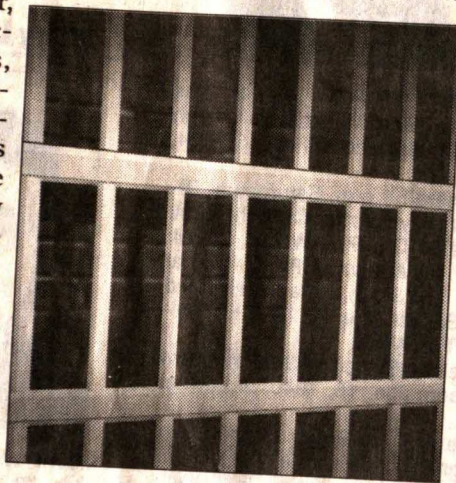
In response to the complaints and boycott of the meals by some prisoners, county purchasing director Jack Beacham and other county officials went to inspect the food service operation.

NUTRITION Tarrant County Jail inmates cannot expect to get gourmet meals, but their fare should at least be sanitary.

Beacham said they saw 17 pans of soured pinto beans, discovered foods that were being kept at improper temperatures, and witnessed one employee drop tortillas on the floor and then place them back on the service line.

County commissioners have given the company 30 days to improve the service or be replaced by another contractor. That is not an unreasonable demand, and it is one that commissioners should act on expeditiously if Aramark fails to comply.

Although some members of the public may not have much sympathy for county jail prisoners, including those who have not yet been convicted of a crime, inmates must be treated humanely — and that includes being fed quality, sanitary meals.



KRT

Ex-manager cites problems with jail's backup supplier

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Mid-States Services — the Hurst company in line to take over Tarrant County's jail food contract if the current company fails to do a better job — has its own food-quality problems, a former Mid-States manager told commissioners Tuesday.

Emilio Gonzalez, who until January was director of operations for Mid-States, said the former jail contractor often took outdated food from its commissary operations and served it to inmates after removing packaging that listed the freshness dates.

"Vendors need to make a profit, but it doesn't need to be at the county's expense," Gonzalez told county commissioners Tuesday during their meeting.

Mid-States Chief Executive John Sammons said the allegations are untrue and blamed them on a competitor that he declined to name.

Sammons said some boxes of outdated food were found in Mid-States' stocks when the company provided food service to the jail, but he said those boxes had already been designated for disposal when jailers told the company to remove them.

"This is another desperate attempt by those who would like to cause Mid-States problems, at a time when the commissioners are looking at us as a back-up supplier," he said.

Last week, commissioners put current contractor Aramark Correctional Services on 30 days' notice to improve the quality of food and service or be removed from the contract.

Mid-States, which held the jail food contract until December, was designated as a back-up supplier if Aramark failed

JAIL Mid-States Services of Hurst, which could take over Tarrant County's jail food contract, often served outdated food to inmates, the former employee says.

to meet the terms.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said Tuesday that in the week since the commissioners issued the ultimatum, Aramark has made improvements and inmate complaints are declining.

Checks of the food service have found improved food temperatures and larger portions, he said.

But the company still has a long way to go to be acceptable, he said.

"If I had to make a recommendation today, I'd cancel the contract," Anderson said.

As to Gonzalez's allegations about Mid-States, Anderson said he would discuss them with commissioners.

"If any of it is true, it's disturbing," he said.

Gonzalez apologized to commissioners for not coming forward sooner, and said that during contract deliberations last fall he was still employed by Mid-States and feared retaliation.

He said he resigned because of concerns about Mid-States' operations. Sammons said that Gonzalez left Mid-States on good terms to take another job and that he was disappointed by the comments.

An Aramark spokeswoman did not return a phone call seeking comment Tuesday but has said Aramark officials believe they are meeting contractual obligations.

Commissioners did not discuss Gonzalez's comments at the Tuesday meeting because the issue was not posted as an

item for consideration. After the meeting, however, commissioners questioned the timing of the comments.

"I'm always grateful for people to come forward, but it's odd that he would come forward at this time," Precinct 1 Commissioner Dionne Bagnaby said.

Precinct 3 Commissioner Glen Whitley said he gave no credence to Gonzalez's comments and would vote to bring in Mid-States if Aramark did not improve its service.

"It just amazes me that this guy shows up to speak against Mid-States a week after we put Aramark on 30-days' notice," he said.

Mid-States was the food service operator that served meals to inmates in the Tarrant County Jail until Aramark won a \$3.3 million contract over Mid-States, Mid-America and Canteen Correctional Services.

Mid-America — run by former Mid-States executive Jack Madera — operates the jail commissary, which sells toiletries and snack items to jail inmates. Madera has been indicted along with two other men on charges that they used a forged document to win a jail food-service contract in Kaufman County.

The indictments stem from an investigation into whether Madera influenced Dallas County Sheriff Jim Bowles with thousands of dollars in favors before Bowles picked Madera's company for a \$20 million jail commissary contract.

The scope has widened to include Madera's dealings with other counties, including Tarrant and Denton.

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Inspection raises concerns about jail food contractor

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A surprise pre-dawn inspection of breakfast preparations at a Tarrant County jail facility raised new concerns about unsanitary practices by the food contractor, county officials said Tuesday.

The unannounced check by county Purchasing Director Jack Beacham and other officials at the Green Bay jail Friday found that inmate meals were being transported in a rented panel truck with dried, spoiled food caked inside.

A stench wafted from the open back of the truck, which was later cleaned but still failed to meet health standards for transporting food, Beacham said.

"We have great concern about whether the company is able to do what they were hired to do," Beacham said.

An Aramark Correctional Services spokeswoman did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday from the *Star-Telegram*, but she has said that the company's services meet the terms of its contract.

Aramark took over the jail's food service in December from Mid-States Services. But two weeks ago, county commissioners told the company that it would lose its contract if it didn't improve service within 30 days.

At the time, Sheriff Dee Anderson said inmates were bordering on revolt with a deluge of complaints about rancid food, unsanitary conditions and substandard offerings.

More than 100 inmates had refused a meal at the medium-security Green Bay facility because of poor quality, officials said.

Anderson said Tuesday that Aramark had made noticeable improvements recently in food quality, quantity and selection.

But he said the discovery of the dirty truck raises new questions about the company's ability to keep the contract.

"This has to be viewed as a setback, if nothing else," Anderson said. "All we have done is put the company on notice. There hasn't been any decision to rescind it."

The Tarrant County Public Health Department looked over the truck after it was cleaned and found that bits of food were still inside and that food oils had soaked into the wood, making it unsuitable for transporting meals, said David Jefferson, the department's environmental health manager.

Aramark has been notified that it must be more careful and fix its problems, but it is not yet facing further sanctions, he said. Food-

SERVICE A surprise inspection at the Green Bay jail has found more problems with the county's contractor.

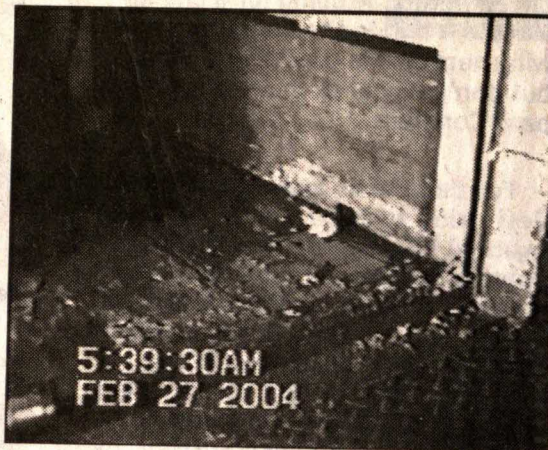


IMAGE FROM VIDEO COURTESY OF TARRANT COUNTY

The interior of this truck rented to Aramark Correctional Services was videotaped at Tarrant County's Green Bay jail during a recent surprise inspection.

"This has to be viewed as a setback, if nothing else. All we have done is put the company on notice."

—Sheriff Dee Anderson

service operators that continue to violate health standards can lose their permits, he said.

Precinct 2 Commissioner Marti Van-Ravenswaay said Tuesday that she hopes Aramark will resolve its problems by the end of the 30 days. But she said she would vote to replace the company if improvements are not made.

"It's still my desire that they find some way to better manage the contract and fulfill their obligations to Tarrant County," Van-Ravenswaay said.

Unless additional problems surface that pose imminent threats to inmates' health, commissioners will give the company the full 30 days to improve, she said.

Aramark won the \$3.3 million contract after coming out on top in a bidding contest with Mid-States, Canteen Correctional Services and Mid-America Services, which holds the contract for the jail commissary.

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Judge delays trial after tapes found

This article contains sexually explicit language.

By DEANNA BOYD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The new trial for a man whose 1999 convictions for murder and rape were overturned last year was delayed Tuesday after Tarrant County jailers found new jail cell tapes of the man engaged in aberrant behavior.

State District Judge James Wilson delivered a stern admonishment to jail staff members whom he accused of ignoring court subpoenas by not finding the tapes earlier, despite warnings that such delays had caused the original convictions to be overturned.

Alphonso Nickerson Jr., 52, is accused in the June 1997 rape-slaying of Maxine Nash, a 64-year-old former John Peter Smith nurse whom he had met in the early 1980s while working as a Tarrant County jailer guarding hospitalized prisoners.

His new trial was delayed until March 22 to give attorneys time to review the tapes and confer with medical experts.

Nickerson was sentenced on March 26, 1999, to life in prison for murder and 99 years for aggravated sexual assault.

In January 2002, the 10th Court of Appeals overturned the convictions, saying the state failed to timely disclose a videotape taken of Nickerson inside his jail cell.

The tape, which displayed Nickerson standing nude, masturbating and rambling almost incoherently, was given by

COURTS A judge puts off a murder trial for three weeks so attorneys can review three videotapes and confer with medical experts.

sheriff's officials to prosecutors midway through the 1999 trial.

Defense attorneys filed for a mistrial, arguing that had their psychiatrists seen the tape months earlier, they might have determined that Nickerson was legally insane.

Testimony was scheduled to begin in the new trial on Tuesday morning when Tarrant County jailers gave prosecutors three new videotapes of Nickerson, one of which again showed a babbling Nickerson masturbating.

In a hearing outside the jury's presence, sheriff's Capt. Mary Hendrix testified that she had received two subpoenas, one in October 2002 and the other on Feb. 17 this year, for records, including videotapes, pertaining to Nickerson.

No tapes were found, she said, but last week prosecutors again asked her to search through boxes of tapes marked to be erased for any tapes showing Nickerson. She said she did not look until Tuesday, when she found the three new tapes, all filmed in 1999.

"I don't have an excuse for that," Hendrix testified regarding the delay in her search. She was later chastised by Wilson for the delay.

Ray Waddell, who is defending Nickerson with Leslie Johns, argued that if the tapes had been produced during the first trial, there might have been a difference in that trial's outcome.



NICKERSON

Commissioners to discuss food contract

By **BILL TEETER**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County commissioners could take action on the troubled jail food services, including terminating the contract, as early as Tuesday, officials said Friday.

An action item concerning Aramark Correctional Services has been placed on the agenda for the Commissioners Court meeting at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius said the possibilities are: Commissioners could decide to end the contract, Aramark could withdraw voluntarily or commissioners could decide to take no action.

Aramark was given 30 days' notice to improve services or face termination of the contract after officials received a flood of complaints about spoiled food, poor quality and unsanitary practices. But commissioners could take action sooner.

If Aramark is removed, the contract calls for it to be replaced by Mid-States Services, the previous contractor. Mid-States would need at least 10 days to get started at the Tarrant County Jail, said Jack Beacham, the county purchasing director.

Aramark was chosen in November for the \$3.3 million contract, which officials said would save the county about \$600,000. Complaints from inmates began almost immedi-

JAIL The provider is given 30 days' notice to improve services or face termination of the contract with Tarrant County.

ately after the company took over the service in December.

Aramark executives declined to comment, spokeswoman Debbie Albert said Friday night.

"It's a private action between our company and the county, and we prefer to keep

"It's a private action between our company and the county, and we prefer to keep it that way."

— Debbie Albert, spokesman for Aramark

it that way," Albert said.

In the first two weeks of the warning period, which began Feb. 17, improvements were noted in food and menu quality, officials have said. An early morning inspection, however, found that food was being transported in a filthy panel truck that did not meet health

standards, they said.

Officials also found spoiled food and unsanitary procedures. Beacham said he saw one worker drop tortillas on the floor that were then returned to the serving line for inmates.

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Aramark ends county jail food contract

JAIL Tarrant County commissioners are expected to accept the resignation today of the much-criticized contractor.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

After more than two months of heat, Aramark is getting out of the Tarrant County jail kitchens.

The beleaguered, Philadelphia-based contractor notified county officials Monday that it is terminating its \$3.3 million food services contract effective March 22.

The Tarrant County Commissioners Court is expected to accept Aramark's resignation today without making any statement of fault against the company.

The jail kitchens would then be turned over to Hurst-based Mid-States Services, which held the contract before being underbid by Aramark Correctional Services last year. Under the current contract, Mid-States is the backup contractor.

On Monday, Commissioner J.D. Johnson said of Aramark, "They just cannot do what they committed to do."

Since Aramark took over jail food preparations in December, inmates and county officials alike have complained about spoiled food, poor quality and unsanitary conditions.

Three weeks ago, commissioners gave Aramark 30 days to address concerns about cleanliness as well as the quality and quantity of food being served to 3,500 inmates a day.

Sheriff Dee Anderson said Monday that "managerial blunders" and other problems with Aramark have continued despite the warnings.

"I don't understand how a corporation of national significance doesn't know how many slices of bread they are going to need," Anderson said. "Stuff like that is real difficult to understand."

Aramark's decision to resign from the contract allows it, in effect, to quit instead of being fired by the county. The effective date of Aramark's departure coincides with the county's deadline for correcting the problems.

"We felt that we did the best we could," said Aramark spokeswoman Debbie Albert. "We think we provided quality work there, but we thought it was in the best interest of all the parties to terminate."

Among the problems that county officials found:

■ Food being transported in a filthy rented panel truck with dried, spoiled food caked inside.

■ Rancid pinto beans at the county's Green Bay jail.

■ An Aramark worker who spilled a batch of flour tortillas on the floor, then picked them up and put them back into the food-service line.

Albert called the problems "startup glitches."

"It is really a consensus with both parties that the contract is not working the way it should be working," she said. "The issue I think, is a lack of confidence, to a certain extent, and a working relationship that does not appear to be beneficial to both parties."

In spite of the tensions, Albert said that Aramark will work to "make sure there is a smooth transition" with the new contractor and that company officials "regret resigning [from] the contract, but we feel it is in our company's best interest to do so."

Anderson said that although Aramark's performance has improved somewhat, "for them to continue with the catastrophic types of mistakes, it was going to be hard for them to overcome."

He said he and commissioners were "pretty horrified" at some of the problems they encountered with Aramark.

"I want to quit worrying about this every day," Anderson said. "I want to be able to walk through my jail without prisoners calling me over to the bars and assailing me with stories about how bad the food is."

"This hasn't worked, and we gave it every opportunity. We did everything we could on our side to make it work."

County Purchasing Director Jack Beacham said that if commissioners give the contract back to Mid-States, the transition could take place as soon as March 20.

John Sammons, chief executive of Mid-States, said the company is "ready, willing and able to take over in a short period of time."

Anderson, for one, is ready to get tension off the menu.

"It is time to move forward and go in a different direction," he said.

Amie Streater (817)390-7541
astreater@star-telegram.com

"We felt like if it would help show jail life, that it's a tough place and people should avoid it, it would have been worthwhile, but it wasn't anything I had a great burning desire to do or not do."

— Sheriff Dee Anderson

Reality show on jail bites bullet

JAIL An MTV show about the Tarrant County Jail may have fizzled.

By AMIE STREATER
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

Was it something we said?

After almost two weeks of filming and months of high hopes, planning and promises, plans for an MTV reality show about Fort Worth justice and life inside the Tarrant County Jail appear to have been shuttered.

Sheriff Dee Anderson and department officials who were working with producer Endemol Entertainment say a production crew filmed inside the jail for about 10 days last fall, but officials haven't heard back from the crew in months.

The last word was that MTV brass loved a demo tape previewing the series and that, as of early December, MTV wanted 60 days to find a space for the show, called *Inside*, on their schedule.

"It's in total limbo," Anderson said. "I don't anticipate it happening now, with this length of time going by and no movement on it, but stranger things have happened."

Janelle Fiorito, an executive producer for Endemol, did not



STAR-TELEGRAM ARCHIVES/JEFFERY WASHINGTON

Inmates at the Tarrant County Corrections Center watch as a cameraman films another inmate during a media tour of the center last fall.

JAIL

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return a phone call last week seeking comment.

Anderson's executive administrator, Terry Grisham, asked the executive producer for a status report in e-mail sent shortly after the Super Bowl but never received a response.

Producers who approached Anderson last year pitched the show as a *Scared Straight*-type reality series intended to show the gritty, unglamorous side of jail life to deter young people from choosing a life of crime.

The production company is also behind such shows as *Fear Factor* and *Big Brother*.

Grisham said the demo tape he saw "did come out exactly like they presented it to us." The demo included interviews with Anderson, inmates and jail officers, footage from inside the jail and information about Fort Worth.

But Anderson said if the show is dead, he won't be disappointed.

"We felt like if it would help show jail life, that it's a tough place and people should avoid it, it would have been worthwhile, but it wasn't anything I had a great burning

desire to do or not do," he said.

Anderson said last year he agreed to accommodate the crew because he thought the show would spread a positive message and that the potential to deter crime would offset any inconvenience to jail workers.

"I did want a director's chair with my name on it," Anderson joked.

"I could just see myself wearing a beret, barking orders at people with a megaphone, but I guess it's not going to come to pass."

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Bizarre video seen at murder trial

By MELODY McDONALD
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — The defense team in the murder trial of a former jailer accused of raping a woman who suffocated under the weight of his body showed jurors videotapes of the man engaged in bizarre behavior behind bars.

For four hours Tuesday, jurors in state District Judge James Wilson's court fidgeted in their seats as they watched tape after tape — nine in all — of Alphonso Nickerson Jr. while he was incarcerated in the Tarrant County Jail and later in prison.

Nickerson, 52, who has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, is accused of raping and suffocating 64-year-old Maxine Nash, a retired John Peter Smith Hospital nurse who met Nickerson while he worked as a jailer guarding hospitalized prisoners.

According to court testimony,

COURTS Jurors view nine videotapes showing Alphonso Nickerson Jr. behaving oddly and lewdly in the Tarrant County Jail and later in prison.

ny, when officers burst through the door of Nash's home in the 900 block of East Richmond Avenue on June 4, 1997, they found the naked, 6-foot-6, 280-pound man raping Nash and repeating an obscene phrase over and over.

When officers finally pulled Nickerson off the woman, they discovered the partially clothed Nash squashed down in a chair, according to court testimony.

Nash, who had five children and 12 grandchildren and was a longtime member of Rising Star Baptist Church, was already dead.

The tapes depicting Nickerson standing naked, masturbating and rambling in his cell in the county jail have become a focal point in this trial, as they did in Nickerson's first trial in March 1999.

The tapes surfaced midway through Nickerson's first trial

and defense attorneys requested a mistrial, arguing that if their psychiatrists had seen the tapes earlier, they might have determined Nickerson was legally insane.

The judge denied their motion, and jurors sentenced Nickerson to life in prison for murder and 99 years for aggravated sexual assault. An appeals court later overturned the convictions and ordered a new trial, saying the state had failed to promptly disclose the tapes and that if jurors had seen them, the outcome may have been different.

This time around, defense attorneys Ray Waddell and Leslie Johns are employing an insanity defense, arguing that at the time of the offense, Nickerson had a severe mental illness or defect that prohibited him from knowing right from wrong.

The first tape jurors saw shows Nickerson on Jan. 8, 1999, standing naked in his jail cell, masturbating and rambling obscenities for hours.

At one point, a jailer sprays him with pepper spray. Shortly thereafter, Nickerson lies

down in his cell and rolls around in water he had drenched the floor with. He is sprayed at least once more with pepper spray and given a sedative — neither of which noticeably affecting his behavior.

Afterward, jurors watched eight more equally disturbing tapes, some shot while Nickerson was in the jail, others while he was in prison.

Earlier Tuesday, prosecutors Lisa Callaghan and James Cook rested their case after calling deputy medical examiner Gary Sisler, who testified that, in addition to suffocating under the weight of Nickerson's body, Nash had been hit on the head and had numerous bruises on her legs, a laceration on the inside of her lip and a stab wound near her anus.

Sisler likened the circumstances of Nash's death by suffocation to what would happen to a person working under a car if the jack gave way.

Testimony is expected to continue at 9 a.m. today in the 371st District Court.

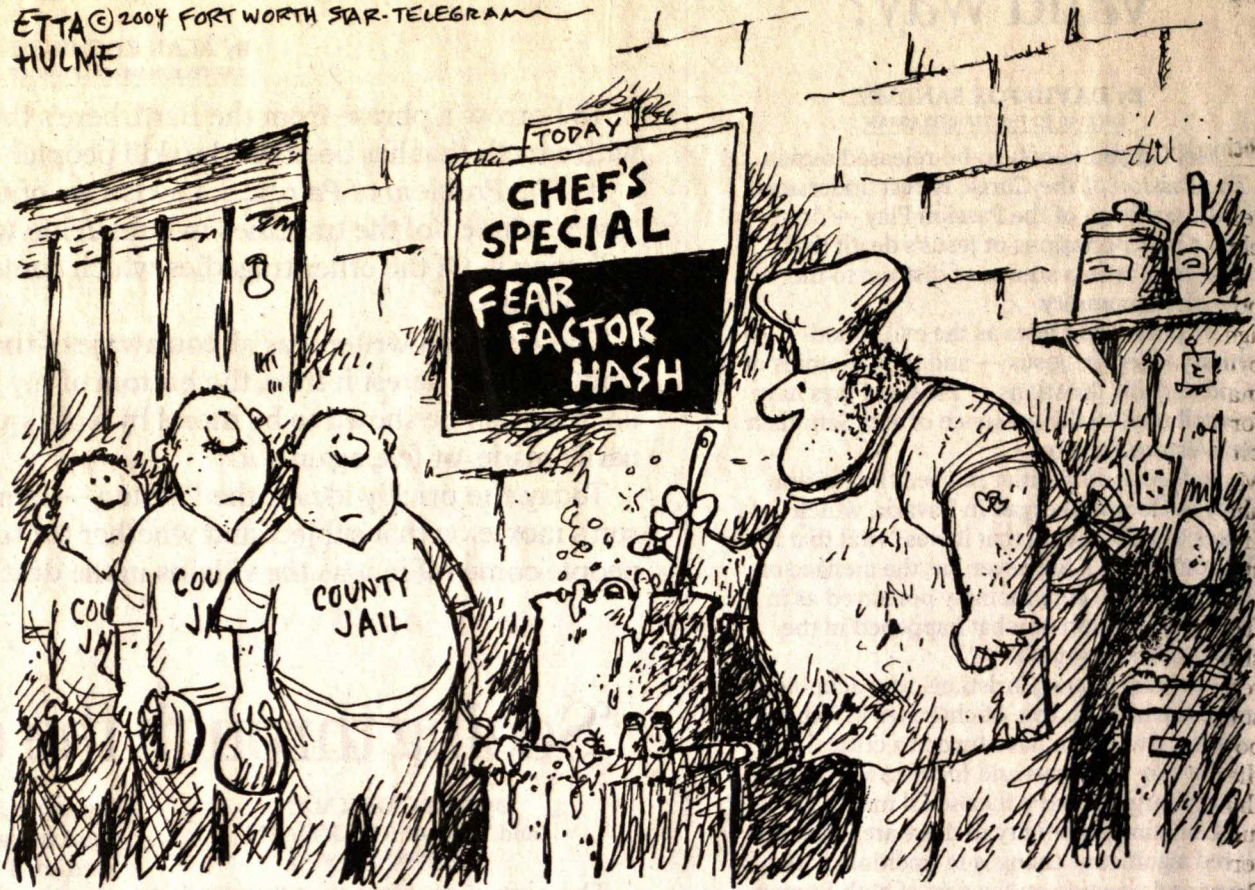
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NICKERSON

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