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Bell employees testify on sex ac

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Southwestern Bell attorneys yesterday introduced a letter signed by former executive James H. Ashley in which Ashley claimed to be the owner of a printing franchise which the company claims represented a conflict of interest.

Ashley had denied under oath earlier in the 16-day trial of his \$29 million libel and slander suit against Southwestern Bell that he owned any interest in the printing franchise and had not profited from it.

Bell attorney Hubert Green subpoenaed the letter from Ray Ellison Industries, a housing firm, which Ashley wrote on behalf of his brother, Lawrence, who was buying a house in 1972.

In the letter, James Ashley, former Bell Commercial manager,

contended he was majority owner of the franchise he claimed would net a \$12,000 profit during the year. He said his brother owned 45 per cent of the net profit.

Ashley admitted in his testimony that his brother operated the firm which did work for the commercial department of Southwestern Bell, but denied it represented a conflict of interest.

Dora Saline, another Southwestern Bell employee, testified earlier yesterday that the company's former printer was dropped and the commercial department began having its printing done with the Ashley franchise in the Spring of 1972. She said the new printer did "very poor work" and the printing always was delivered late.

Ashley's former secretary, Karen Pinjet, told the jury she typed the letter but that shortly before his

suspension on Oct. 9, 1974, Ashley took it from the files. "He said, 'we don't need this,' crumpled it up and threw it in the waste basket."

Mrs. Pinjet also said during an alleged sex party at a local motel suite Sept. 11-13, 1974, Ashley had her to telephone his wife, Bonnie, and tell her that Ashley was away on business in Corpus Christi. Ashley denied having sex relations during the party, but five Bell employees testified that he did have intercourse with a Bell employee.

In defending the suit, Bell yesterday called 15 women employees who testified that Ashley was a "dirty old man," "lecherous," and a "woman chaser."

Ashley contends he was wrongfully fired from his job and his friend, Texas vice president T.O. Gravitt, committed suicide because the two men were opposing wrongdoing within the telephone company.

Bell has countered that Ashley and Gravitt were engaged in handing out promotions for sexual favors from female employees. Ashley had

a conflict of interest in the firm, and the two executives bilking the telephone company thousands of dollars with expense vouchers.

Gas cutoff still debated in CO

United Press International
CRYSTAL CITY, Tex. — Attorneys said yesterday they were prepared to go to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell to get natural gas from being cut off 8,000 residents of this South Texas city.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans last week issued an injunction preventing a threatened cutoff by the Gathering Co. until 12:01 a.m. Thursday.

"We're waiting word from the circuit whether it will continue an injunction pending a hearing," Nieto said.

Justice Powell will be asked to grant an interview if the court doesn't grant one.

Next FBI boss better

United Press International
HOUSTON — FBI director-designate Frank M. Johnson Jr., recovering from surgery to repair a weakened main artery, yesterday was reported "up and walking around."

He's eating solid foods," a Methodist hospital spokesman said. "He is in a room. He was moved out of intensive care yesterday."

Johnson, 58, a Montgomery, Ala., federal judge, was nominated for the FBI directorship Aug. 17. He said doctors discovered the aneurism on his aorta the next day

during a routine physical examination.

Dr. Michael E. DeBakey operated Friday and, afterward, predicted a full recovery within six weeks. It will then be determined whether and when Johnson will face Senate confirmation hearings.

"He's not receiving any visitors other than wife, Ruth," the hospital spokesman said. "He has so many friends, the doctor doesn't want him to receive visitors or telephone callers."

Johnson was expected to leave the hospital and return home within a week.

Court blocks ord

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Justice Lewis Powell yesterday blocked a court order requiring exclusive use of single-member districts for election of Dallas city council members until the Supreme Court can take a look at the plan.

Powell said if he did not grant the application by city officials, the blacks who started the lawsuit were likely to "press promptly for a special election," probably killing the city's challenge.

The justice said further that he thinks at least four justices — the necessary number — will vote to hear the appeal when the city files it.

The case has been back and forth from court to council since 1971. The complaining blacks attacked as a dilution of their vote the system in effect since 1907 of electing all council members on a citywide basis. Eight places were reserved for candidates who lived in one of eight residential districts and three were chosen regardless of residence.

The U.S. District Court found the system unconstitutional but instead of imposing a new procedure it allowed the council itself to suggest one. The council adopted an ordinance providing for election of a member from each of eight single-member districts, with the remaining three elected at large as before.

Relying on a 1976 Supreme Court decision involving state legislative

districts, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court invalidated this scheme and set a new one with single-member districts only.

Powell said the Supreme Court "has declared repeatedly that standards for evaluating the multimember and at-large plans differ depending on whether federal court or a state legislature initiated the use."

If the court imposes the single-member districts in the absence of unusual circumstances, he noted, but the state accepts this responsibility, efforts to reconcile the policies should not be restricted beyond the Constitution's equal protection for all. He said the 5th Circuit "appears to have set these two standards."

"While we have never held that municipal elections are entitled to the same respect as those of state legislatures, there is reason to believe that should be," the opinion said. The court at one point indicated that "citywide representation" appears to be a valid interest in Dallas in matters with zoning, budgets and elections.

The Supreme Court is on summer recess. It will act on the city's petition for review of its Dallas election was set for Sept. 1978.

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