

Estes back to jail

'Church-going convicted swindler' violates his parole

United Press International
FORT WORTH — Texas wheeler-dealer Billie Sol Estes, who admitted to a federal judge he conspired to cheat on his taxes and violate his parole, will probably serve 15 months in prison under terms of a plea bargain, the government's chief investigator said Thursday.

Estes' admission of guilt Wednesday came only a few months after he had told reporters he was innocent and that federal prosecutors were harassing him and attempting to "blackmail" him into prison. But by pleading guilty, the church-going convicted swindler won government assurance no other charges would be brought against him. Perhaps most important to Estes, the government also promised that his family — including his wife, older brother and eldest daughter — would be granted immunity from prosecution.

"His parole will be revoked, but for what period of time, we don't know," said U.S. Attorney Ken Mighell. "It's up to the Parole Commission. They have to give him a hearing and we don't know when that will be."

But Mighell said the terms of the plea bargain called for "a prison

term of about 15 months." If the U.S. Parole Commission were to order Estes back to prison for the remaining nine years of his 1965 sentence or if U.S. District Judge Eldon Mahon chose to assess a harsher punishment than 15 months, Estes could end the arrangement with the government.

"But then he would open himself to the likelihood of an indictment and trial on the same or possibly stiffer charges," the prosecutor said. On Wednesday Estes, 52, with graying hair but still wearing the horn-rimmed glasses which made him look more like a college professor than one of the legendary swindlers of all time, calmly pleaded guilty to conspiring to defraud the government by "fronting" his businesses with associates and family and by concealing assets from the Internal Revenue Service.

"Are you pleading guilty because you are guilty and for no other reason?" Judge Mahon asked.

"Yes sir," Estes replied. Mahon said he would determine Estes' punishment after a presentence investigation by the parole board. He said in the meantime Estes would remain free without posting bond.

In the early 1960s Estes' name

became synonymous with easy money as he amassed a fortune with phantom fertilizer tanks. His net worth once reached as high as \$250 million, but his paper empire crumbled into bankruptcy.

He was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison in 1965, but was paroled in 1971. He returned to Abilene, Texas, took on a job as a janitor and truck driver dispatcher and announced he was abandoning

high finance.

But former business associates claimed Estes was anything but retired.

Mighell said Estes' court appearance ended an 18-month investigation that was launched by the published reports Estes had violated the terms of his federal parole specifically prohibiting him from self-employment or engaging in any promotional activities.

On Sept. 6, U.S. District Judge Leo Brewster in Abilene declared Estes and his wife owed \$39,769,796 in back taxes on earnings between 1959 and 1962 — the height of his fraudulent but highly profitable business dealings.

Estes' attorneys then asked for a Tuesday meeting with federal prosecutors which led to Wednesday's plea bargain.

La Raza candidate says Krueger aide made bribe

United Press International
AUSTIN — The La Raza Unida candidate for the U.S. Senate Thursday told a U.S. assistant attorney in Brownsville that supporters of Rep. Bob Krueger, D-Texas, offered him a job and \$2 million in inducements to drop out of the Senate race.

Luis Diaz DeLeon of Leander, said the person offering the inducements indicated the 2 to 3 percent of the votes the La Raza Unida

candidate might attract could determine the outcome of the race between Krueger and Sen. John G. Tower, R-Texas.

DeLeon met privately Thursday with Assistant U.S. Attorney Ruben DeLuna, but DeLuna declined to say what was discussed and said DeLeon had not filed any formal complaint. The La Raza candidate requested the meeting, DeLuna said.

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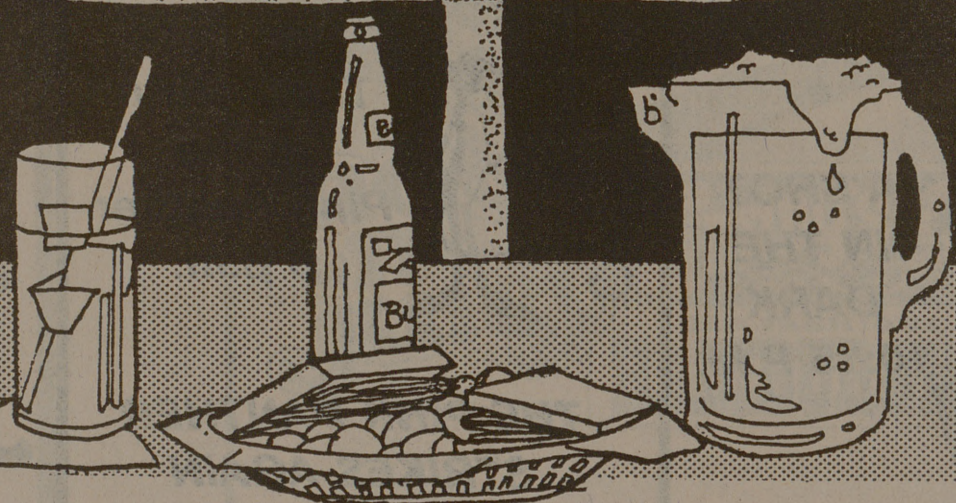
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