

state

Montrose Patrol works with cops

United Press International
HOUSTON — The members of the Montrose Patrol are policing their own neighborhood to make up for what they see as inadequate police protection in growth-strained Houston.

Police officials, who have 3,000 officers and say they need 2,000 more to patrol a 600-square-mile city of 1.7 million, said they will tolerate the patrol if members keep in mind that they are not police and stay within the law.

Leaders of the 11-month-old organization, founded by homosexuals who live in the Montrose area just west of downtown, said it has improved relations between the gay community and the police.

They also said the 20-member weekend patrol is no longer exclusively homosexual but has attracted participation by straights who believe their community needs more patrolling.

"Now about 20 percent of our members are straight," said Tom Plemmons, one of the patrol's seven supervisors. "People don't check on your sexual preference before they bash your head in."

Steve Coats, patrol leader, said they work mostly Friday and Saturday nights, as well as other nights when large crowds are expected in Montrose. He said the members use their own cars, for which they are paid 18 cents a mile.

"We not only feel we have made a significant impact on street violence," Coats said, "but have also managed to change the attitudes between segments of the gay community and the Houston Police Department."

Deputy Police Chief R.G. McKeehan was guarded in his comments about the group.

"Any community involvement which assists us in fighting crime is welcome as long as they follow the rules themselves," McKeehan said. "We haven't heard anything adverse about this particular group."

Coats, a teacher at Houston Community College, said rules are strict. Patrol members are constantly reminded they are not policemen and are forbidden to carry weapons or use guard dogs, Coats said. Members are told to radio a dispatcher who will call police about any trouble.

"If we see a crime in progress, we will intervene and we realize the risks we take when we do that," Coats said. "But our principal purpose is prevention."

One member of the patrol has received minor injuries in breaking up a fight.

McKeehan said the patrol has provided useful information to police.

"They're probably the most cohesive group in the city trying to do something in their own community. They're spending quite a bit of time and money," McKeehan said.

Six persons dead in Lufkin blaze

United Press International
LUFKIN — A fire in a low-income apartment building killed six family members, including four children, early Thursday and fire officials credit a car burglar alarm for waking other residents.

The room (where the fire started) had a burglar alarm and it was going off and I think that probably woke up most of the people," Gibson said. "Apparently it was set off by the heat and woke up someone and he started knocking on doors."

The bodies of Bryant, 26, his wife, Mary, 26, and their four children — Melinda, 8, Tyrone, 7, Mitchell Lee, 6, and Ray Charles Jr., 5, — were found scattered around the apartment.

"Apparently the parents tried to get out," Fire Department Lt. Charles Selman said. "The father was found in the kitchen door and the mother was found between the bathroom and the hallway to the door. One of the kids was found by a window, another one on the floor, another in bed and one beneath a bed."

Several other apartments at the Lufkin Courts were occupied but all other occupants were evacuated safely, Fire Marshal Roscoe Gibson said. Cause of the blaze had not been determined.

"A car parked right next to the

Texas reports high incidence of rabies

United Press International
AUSTIN — One hundred and sixteen new cases of rabies were reported in March, the chief of the veterinary public health bureau of the Texas Department of Health announced Thursday.

identified in 22 dogs, 18 cats, nine horses and six cats.

On a good note, TDH announced that in 1979 no cases of polio or diphtheria had been reported.

Dr. Jerome H. Greenberg, deputy commissioner for preventable diseases, said the statistics reflect a nationwide trend with the decline of childhood diseases.

"We've got as good an immunization program as any in the nation," he said.

Greenberg said no cases of polio or diphtheria have been reported in the state in two years.

Dr. Foy V. McCasland said statistics for the first three months of 1980 are ahead of last year when 1,195 confirmed cases of rabies were reported.

McCasland said that of the 116 cases reported in March, 82 involved skunks. He said rabies also were in-

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Low census return rate unexplained in Houston

United Press International
HOUSTON — A disappointing 55 percent of mailed-out census forms have been returned in the nation's fastest growing big city, and the Census Bureau has too few workers to pursue delinquents, officials said Thursday.

Census officials said they were unable fully to explain the low return rate on the 1.3 million forms mailed in Houston. Other cities have experienced much higher return rates.

But officials said the difficulty recruiting census workers could be attributed to low unemployment (about 4 percent), low pay (\$3.50 an hour) and the unpleasantness and temporariness of the work.

Officials said some of the mailback problem could be attributed to the transient nature of much of Houston's population, and its rapid growth. They said many residents had called in to say they never received their forms.

"In areas of high growth, we've

missed whole condominiums," west Houston census manager Urban O'Brien said. "Sometimes we've missed whole apartment projects."

O'Brien said anyone with the time to work a few hours will be welcomed.

"We have teachers working from 9 to 10 o'clock at night," he said. "We can't physically get the numbers to come in and take the (qualifying) test."

Noe Balli, regional census coordinator, said the bureau has 3,700 workers and needs 14,000. He said

the bureau might be forced to bring in workers from other regions to complete the census.

Palmer Bowser, assistant to Mayor Jim McConn, said the city has been baffled by the census takers' failure to take advantage of the Manpower federal job-training program.

"We have a lot of problems working with the U.S. Labor and Commerce departments as to what the Manpower employees can do," answered Lionel Rawlins, central Houston census manager.



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