

State

Investigation into judge's assassination is resumed

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — A federal grand jury Wednesday reconvened from a month layoff in the investigation of the assassination of U.S. District Judge John H. Wood Jr., and the panel appeared to continue its focus on convicted drug dealer Jimmy Chagra.

Chagra's brother-in-law, Ed Nichols of El Paso, was among six persons called to testify before the federal grand jury — the second grand jury to try to indict Wood's killer since the

judge's death almost two years ago.

Nichols, 24, walked into the secluded witness room of the grand jury along with at least six other witnesses. He later testified before the panel but refused to comment on his testimony.

Chagra, along with his brother Joe Chagra, an El Paso attorney, have been identified as targets of the investigation, which federal officials have compared in its intensity to investigations of presidential assassinations.

Despite the intense inquiry, authorities have

yet to produce any indictments, witnesses to the shooting or the murder weapon, which is believed to be a high-velocity rifle.

Wood, dubbed "Maximum John" for meting out stiff sentences to convicted drug dealers, was the first federal judge slain in the line of duty. He was shot in the back outside his north San Antonio apartment on May 29, 1979.

Nichols appeared at the John H. Wood Jr. Federal Courthouse in San Antonio with his father, Leon "Red" Nichols, who previously had

testified before the panel. The elder Nichols said he did not know why his son was subpoenaed.

"He did go with his sister, Liz, to visit Jimmy (Chagra) in Leavenworth a couple of times," the elder Nichols said.

Others subpoenaed Wednesday by the grand jury included Jimmy Walker, a pilot for a Las Vegas charter jet service which had been used by Jimmy Chagra, and Earl McLennan, a Florida man convicted in a Boston federal court this month for aiding then-fugitive Jimmy Chagra in

his flight from federal authorities.

Official comment on the case has been sparse, although Joe Chagra has said federal investigators told him that his family was the focus of the probe.

Jimmy Chagra, an El Paso gambler now serving a 30-year federal prison term, was to have appeared in Wood's courtroom for trial on drug charges when the judge was shot to death.

Man wins \$646,000 for skin rash

United Press International
CALVESTON — Dow Chemical Co. was ordered Tuesday to pay \$646,000 in damages to a man afflicted with a severe skin rash that he said was caused by exposure to sulfuric acid at Dow's Freeport plant.

Sam C. Burdick, 63, sued the company six years ago after he developed contact dermatitis while working as a subcontractor in a chlorine drying vessel. He later sued Dow for \$1.5 million in damages and moved to Seattle, Wash., where his skin condition is less likely to be aggravated.

Burdick's skin condition recurs about every 30 days when blisters break out over his body, said attorney Alton Todd, representing Burdick.

After five days of testimony in U.S. District Judge Hugh Gibson's court, a jury ruled Dow was negligent in inspecting and preparing the vessel for burning operations and in warning that dangerous chemicals were in the vessel.

Burdick was awarded \$600,000 for loss of earnings, pain and suffering, \$6,000 for past medical care and \$40,000 for future medical expenses.

Gator death charges end in acquittal

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — A San Antonio teen-ager who hacked an alligator to death with a shovel has been found innocent of killing an endangered animal.

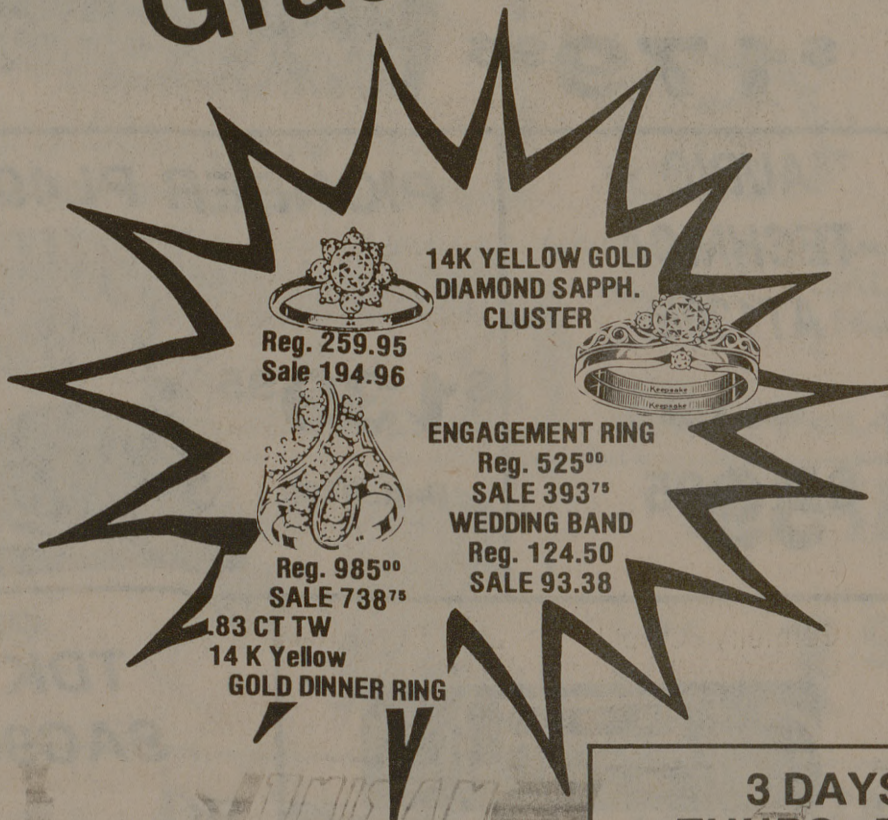
Joe Rodriguez, 19, said he had killed the American alligator after it charged him and two companions while they were fishing on Leon Creek south of San Antonio.

Justice of the Peace Adam Serrata ruled Tuesday that Rodriguez was not guilty of a misdemeanor with a maximum \$200 fine because the state had no witnesses to the alleged April 14 crime. He said Rodriguez had not been read his Miranda rights when arrested.

Serrata also said he doubted Rodriguez would have known whether he was killing an American alligator, a protected species, or a South American alligator, which is not considered endangered.

"I don't think too many people are going to distinguish between an American and South American alligator when they are being approached by one," the justice ruled.

Mother's Day & Graduation



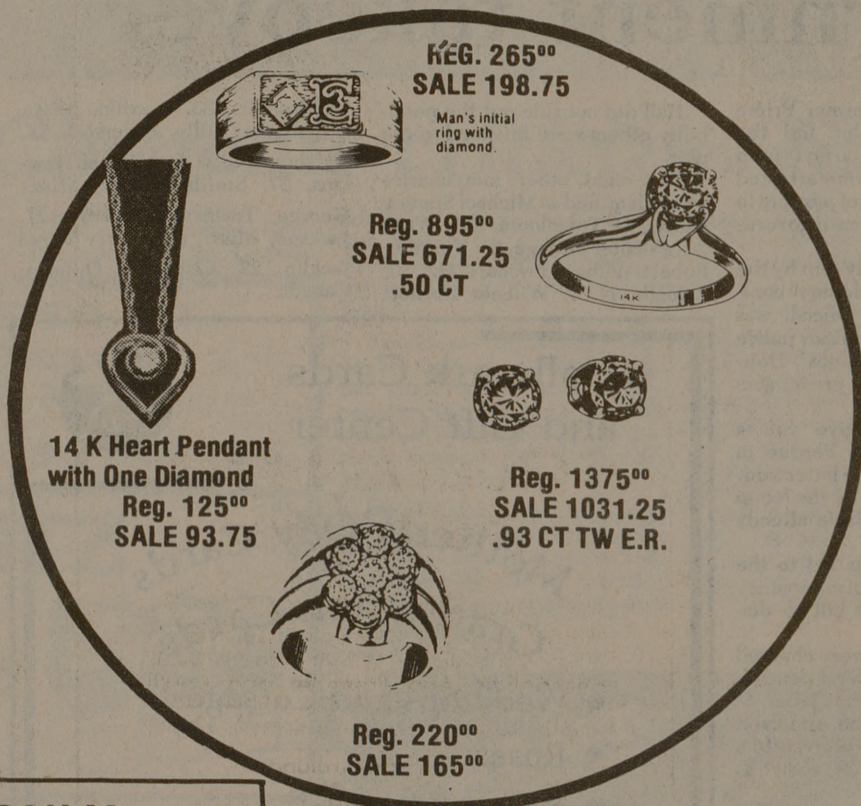
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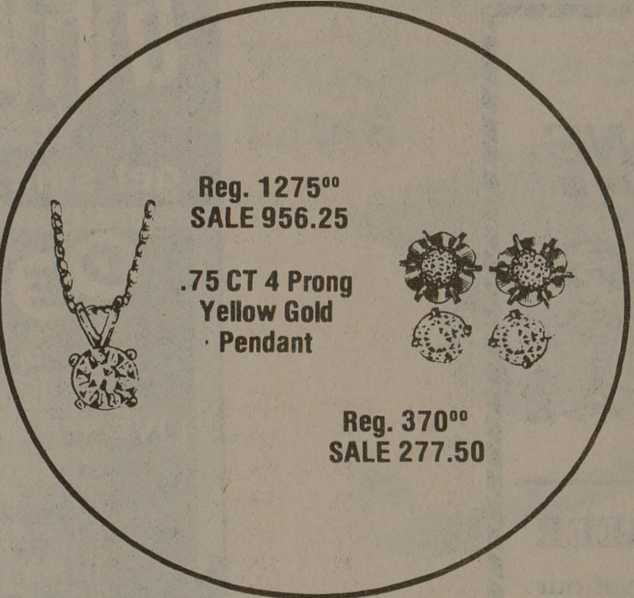


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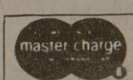

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