

Bandit gang dons smocks to rob stores **Local**

United Press International
HOUSTON — Police are investigating a rash of robberies of small grocery stores in which four to five bandits herd clerks into a back room, don smocks and operate the stores while robbing them.

Investigators have no suspects in 20 holdups dating back to early October in southeast Houston, police said Wednesday. No one has been hurt in any of robberies. Police said four or five black men have entered each store and

netted about \$1,000 in cash and merchandise in each case. The men have carried off the store's safe twice. The gang strikes in the early hours on weekends, police said.

Today's Almanac

Today is Friday, Dec 4., the 338th day of 1981 with 27 to follow. The moon is in its first quarter.

The morning stars are Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The evening star is Venus. Those born on this date are under the sign of Sagittarius.

On this date in history: In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered liquidation of the Works Projects Administration, created in 1935 in the depths of the Depression to provide work for the unemployed.

A thought for the day: President George Washington said: "There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon favors from nation to nation."



Staff photo by Dave E...

Lord Milton, played by David Ruiz, presents Lady Milton, played by Katy Pickvance, "a ruby as large as a pear," during a scene performed at the Madrigal Dinner at MSC.

Madrigals toast Christmas

Festive affair has true spirit

By NANCY WEATHERLEY
Battalion Staff
Many people looking for the Christmas spirit traveled back in time Thursday night to find it.

The first annual MSC Madrigal Dinners, which began Thursday night and will run through Satur-

day night, took participants back to a sixteenth century Christmas celebration with song and fellowship.

As the title of the dinners suggests, the style was madrigal singing. Madrigal singing began as an informal type of private entertainment at castle and homes, with lords and ladies frequently performing the music themselves, according to the written introduction.

About 360 people joined in the merry-making Thursday, and the other two nights are also sold out, Debbie Murray, MSC Box Office ticket manager, said.

Merry-makers going to the feast were led through a merchant's fair — which depicted a village outside a castle — featuring hand-made crafts, jugglers, magicians and even a fortune teller.

People attending the dinners tonight and Saturday are advised to bring extra money, for this fair turned out to be a great place to do some Christmas shopping. Gifts included stained glass ornaments, hand-spun cloth and fired pottery.

A lot of gifts were \$10 and under, but some, such as an exquisite stain-glass angel for \$98, were expensive.

Throughout the fair and feast, singers and dancers roamed around in medieval fashions, adding to the festive atmosphere. Even the merchants were in dress.

Even though the walls of the MSC ballroom are some horror film director's vision of the bicentennial, the spirit of an open medieval village, bustling around in lively anticipation of the king's feast came through.

People joked gaily with jugglers and several ambitious souls joined in a medieval ring dance.

The court jester announced the beginning of the feast by saying: "With each sound of trumpet fanfare, you will discover Christmas as celebrated in the ancient traditions of Merrie Olde England. We present this annual dinner for your pleasure at the Christmas Season."

The feast was just that, with food specially catered for the

event. While guests of the dinner, singers presented several songs like the Wassail Song and the Boar's Head Carol.

After the dinner, a short play of brotherly love was presented, and then members of the royal court began a Christmas concert.

Kim Griffiths, vice chairman of operations for the dinners, said the dinners were intended to capture the missing spirit of Christmas.

Keith Bland, chairman of the dinners, agreed: "We are trying to capture the warm feeling of Christmas."

The idea for the madrigal dinners came from MSC Director Reynolds, Bland said.

Bland, while serving as MSC council assistant in 1980, began researching the dinners and visited three universities to see they put together their madrigal dinners.

This is the first year for the dinners, but Reynolds said the interest in the dinners was so great that they will make them an annual event.

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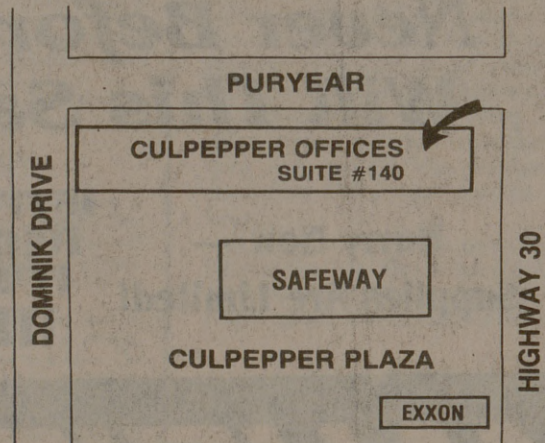
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