

Newspapers fight to survive

Two weeklies war in Wylie

United Press International
WYLIE — A newspaper war is being waged in this small north Texas town between a 3-month-old weekly described as controversial by some and a 35-year-old paper founded by a man who wants to "leave the sensational to the big city dailies."

Del Wilson, a computer services company employee, started the weekly Wylie Citizen on March 23 because he said the established weekly paper, the Wylie News, presented only one side of issues.

Wylie News founder Truett Smith, also a banker and insurance agency owner, favored an

airport bond issue and Wilson opposed it. The issue failed by a 2-1 margin.

Wilson said he first thought about starting a newspaper when the Wylie News did not cover the 1980 trial in which Lucas Sunday School teacher Candace Montgomery was acquitted of the ax slaying of Wylie teacher Betty Gore.

The decision not to cover the trial was in keeping with Smith's ideas about the purpose of his newspaper, which he said should "build up a community, not tear it down."

Smith said: "I prefer to stay away from sensational items. I think in a town this size we

should leave the sensational to the big city dailies."

Wilson, 34, a Lubbock native who moved to Wylie four years ago, said a newspaper should be honest, open and frank and represent the views of people who read it.

"This newspaper is not my newspaper," Wilson said of the Citizen. "It belongs to the people who live and work in this area."

Smith, 65, was born near Wylie, started the First State Bank and has been active in state and local business and professional organizations for many years.

Smith said it is difficult for two newspapers to survive in the

same town. Wilson said he hopes the two papers can co-exist.

Some area residents say they like having two newspapers, while at least one merchant does not advertise in the Citizen because "it is too controversial and against everything."

Chamber of Commerce president Tim Hemingway said there is a need for more local news.

"I think it's wonderful because there are two different views on a subject being presented," said Gertie Douthitt, who runs a dry goods and variety store with her husband. "You get more news."

Squatters claiming old homes in nationwide reform effort

United Press International
HOUSTON — Ellipse Park in Washington this week will be the camp of a group of urban pioneers willing to take the legal risks of squatting in dilapidated houses for their only chance at owning a home.

The squatters have occupied abandoned houses across the country under the direction of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, which is sponsoring the "squatting" in the Washington park Wednesday through Friday.

One of those who hopes to attend is Verna Bush, 28, a single mother of three who has taken residence in an abandoned home in Houston.

ACORN helped Bush locate her home. Because squatting is illegal, ACORN is careful to select abandoned homes whose owners are dead or who cannot be located or who likely never will reclaim the property be-

cause of accumulated back taxes.

The home Bush chose has been vacant two years and has a delinquent tax bill of \$2,409 for 17 years.

Neighbors were eager for her to settle in the windowless, broken down eyesore, but friends have discouraged her because of possible legal problems.

"But I tell them I already know that and I'm taking a chance," Bush said. "It's worth the risk and effort because I could not afford a house otherwise."

Houston ACORN staffer Joe McCartin said: "Squatting is a dramatic way to focus on the lack of local and federal housing for low and moderate-income working people and the lack of programs to rehabilitate inner-city housing."

"We hope this program will give us a handle on inner-city

neighborhoods and make sure abandoned homes are not turned over to developers and speculators."

Although Houston officials do not plan to evict squatters, they have been evicted from houses in Tulsa, Okla., Atlanta and Dallas, ACORN said. Nationwide, about 200 squatters remain in their adopted homes.

"The city of Philadelphia has passed a nuisance abatement program which basically legalizes squatting," Mike Shea, nationwide staff coordinator of ACORN's housing campaign said.

"Those who turn in abandoned houses that have delinquent taxes get a contract with the city. The city then puts a lien on the house for back taxes and buys it. The title is then turned over to the squatters once they fix the house up."

Shea said if an owner sur-

faces, he must pay the taxes and

repay the squatter for improvements. The Department Housing and Urban Development is the largest owner of vacant housing. HUD has acquired more than 11,000 homes nationwide because owners defaulted on federally insured VA and FHA loans, Shea said.

Shea said HUD lets the houses sit until it can sell them to speculators or real estate developers, who he said turn them into slum houses and use them as tax shelters.

"It's a Robin Hood in reverse," Shea said. "HUD is taking from the poor and giving to the rich."

He admitted the squatters' battle for improved housing is tough.

"It's legally wrong and morally right for people to squat," he said. "But 20 years ago, civil rights was illegal, also."

Two Waco cops shot

United Press International
WACO — Two policemen remained hospitalized with gunshot wounds the day after a gun battle on a downtown street.

Officer Frank M. Gentsch was in critical but stable condition late Sunday with gunshot wounds to the stomach and

arm. Reserve Officer Terry Linebaugh was in good condition, with a gunshot wound to the leg.

Frederick J. Watkins, 26, was being held in the county jail under \$200,000 bond and charged with two counts of attempted capital murder, officials said Sunday.

The two policemen were patrolling in their car late Saturday when they tried to stop a man on foot near the bus station, Detective Mike Trantham said.

Gentsch stepped out of the car and the suspect pulled out a gun and began firing, hitting the officer twice, he said.

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