



Popcorn popper gourmets

staff photo by Irene Mees

The redpots got a real surprise Friday morning at 5:30 when Maura Phelan, left, and Donna Smith served them a breakfast in "Redpot Hotel" on Bonfire site. The breakfast, prepared in popcorn poppers, consisted

of scrambled eggs, cheese omelets, bacon, sausage, and English muffins. Phelan, a sophomore from Houston, and Smith, a sophomore from Hurst, topped off the meal with fresh coffee.

Wood portrayed as gambler, womanizer

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Spectators at the murder trial of Charles Harrelson got their first real insight into his character last week by listening to taped conversations with four women Harrelson professed to love and to the testimony of a "snitch."
The evidence indicated Harrelson was obsessed with the fear his family and friends would turn against him after the shooting death of federal Judge John H. Wood in 1979. Eventually, they did.

Harrelson, 44, was the FBI's main suspect from the day Wood was killed outside his San Antonio apartment. Authorities say Harrelson killed Wood for \$250,000 from gambler Jimmy Chagra, who feared a life sentence from Wood at a drug smuggling trial.

John Lee Spinelli, an inmate "snitch," said he "didn't want to end up like Mr. Harrelson."
"To me," Spinelli said,

"Charles was a puppet master. He had all these people on a string, jumping. But the strings were being cut by various things, the puppets were heading to save themselves, to get the hell out of Dodge."

Harrelson's stepdaughter and former lovers and friends testified against him after the government promised not to prosecute them for possible involvement in the Wood case.

Before the prosecution rested last week, it painted an unflattering picture of a convicted hitman, paroled in 1978, who resumed his life as a dishonest gambler, a heavy drug user and a womanizer.

The FBI, gathering evidence in the Wood case by wiretapping and bugging Harrelson in jail, clearly captured his different lines.

"It's important for you to know I love you unequivocally," Harrelson told Jo Ann Robinson, the wife of rancher Hamp-

ton Robinson of Huntsville.

The two did not know that Robinson was cooperating with the FBI and had turned Harrelson in on a weapons violation — the reason he was in jail.

"I'll get out of here next month. I'll take you with me," Harrelson promised his stepdaughter, Teresa Starr, a few days later.

"I love you," Harrelson said to Virginia Farah, a wealthy El Paso businesswoman, in a phone call. "I don't care if it harelips the world."

"I love you, dammit, and even this will pass," he assured his fourth wife, Jo Ann Harrelson, through the screen in a steel visiting door at the jail.

Unemployment fund dry

AUSTIN — Amid concern about further tax increases, the state of Texas had to borrow \$1.8 million from the federal government to meet payments from the unemployment compensation fund.

The Legislature met in special session in September and voted to allow the state to borrow federal money — with interest charges that may reach as high as \$40 million — to bail out the troubled fund.

Despite a nearly five-fold increase in employers' taxes passed during the Legislature's special session, the fund officially went dry Friday and had to borrow \$1.8 million from the federal

government to pay \$3.7 million in unemployment claims.

But analyst John Kennedy said the pay-out rate on which that tax increase was calculated is already proving to be below the mark. He said jobless Texans drew \$20 million more in benefits than was expected from the fund in September and October, and he predicted unless the economy makes a dramatic recovery, Texas employers will be stuck with another tax hike.

Nolan Ward, chairman of the Texas Employment Commission, said the estimated wage base, from which unemploy-

ment taxes are drawn, could be 10 percent lower next year than experts thought when the Legislature met.

Texas Employment Commissioner Ken Clapp said there was no way of knowing if the projections were right.

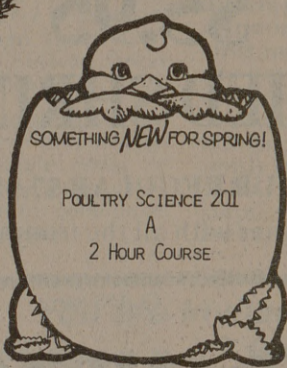
"We hope it's correct because the employers don't need another tax, just as citizens don't need more taxes," Clapp said.

"But if it does turn out that it's wrong, we can correct it next year when the Legislature is in session."

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