

Drug searches probed

United Press International
HOUSTON — A federal prosecutor has confirmed a federal grand jury is investigating officials in San Jacinto County for possible civil rights violations.

The officials are accused of selectively stopping motorists and searching their cars for drugs.

The nature of the complaints by several citizens is that they were illegally arrested and they were illegally searched," Assistant U.S. Attorney Lupe Salinas said Friday. "I can confirm that a grand jury investigation has been initiated and it is considering the case."

FBI agents within the past two weeks seized financial and arrest records from San Jacinto County Sheriff J.C. Parker and from Coldspring businessman Herb Atwood and Bank of San Jacinto County president Jim Browder, both of whom wrote bail bonds in

the county. Several of the officials under investigation by the federal government were previously named as defendants in a civil suit filed last summer by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of several people.

The plaintiffs said they were driving along U.S. 59 North through San Jacinto County when they were randomly stopped and their cars were searched by deputy sheriffs for marijuana or drugs.

One of the plaintiffs, Kippi Dale Carr, 27, of Baytown said he was heading through the county last November when he was stopped by the sheriff's son, Gary Parker, 23, and arrested for carrying a piece of broomstick in his car.

"I was told the piece of broomstick that I used as a prop to keep my CB radio from rattling was a prohibited weapon. I couldn't believe

what was happening to me," Carr said. No drugs were found in his car.

Carr paid a bondsman the \$100 on a \$1,000 bond and a \$47.50 towing fee for his pickup. He was released from the jail in Coldspring four hours later.

A check of courthouse records showed no charge ever was filed against Carr.

Records show 1,124 drug-related cases were made in San Jacinto County in 1981 by the five deputies and 21 non-salaried reserve deputies. Only Harris County's 700 deputies made more drug arrests last year.

Many of the those arrested said their cars were towed, they were jailed for several hours and then forced to pay a bond and towing fees. But the lawsuit said none of those arrested were called to court for a hearing.

Sheriff Parker said in at least 61 of the arrests, charges

were never officially filed because of a "monumental screw-up in our paper work" which resulted when a secretary became sick and later quit.

None of the bond money was returned to those arrested.

In 1978 the county was sued in a case similar to the one brought by Carr. It was settled for an unspecified amount of money, a spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union said.

ACLU lawyers Jeff McClure and Ruben Rendon are representing the plaintiffs in the latest case. No court action is expected until next year. McClure said it is not illegal for law enforcement officials to set up roadblocks on highways and question motorists about alcohol, licenses, drugs and insurance.

"But this is a case of selectively stopping only certain individuals," he said.

Harrelson laughs, jokes in testifying

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Charles Harrelson, the 100th witness in his six-week-old trial for the slaying of a federal judge, laughed, joked and poked fun at the district attorney, but jurors failed to crack a smile.

Harrelson, accused of the 1979 slaying of federal Judge John Wood, testified Friday under the guidance of defense testimony Tom Sharpe, tracing his life to 1973 before court was recessed for the weekend.

The gambler, 44, sauntered to the witness chair to detail his childhood in Walker County, service in the Navy, a career as professional gambler and a series of arrests, including a 1973 conviction for the shooting death of a Hearne businessman.

At one point, Harrelson joked that his profession since he was last jailed in September 1980 had been "making tapes for the government" — a reference to FBI bugging and wire-tapping tapes that have been used against him in the trial. Jurors did not laugh.

The trial was recessed until 9 a.m. today shortly after Harrelson told jurors he had been sentenced to 15 years in prison in 1973 for the shooting death of Sam Degelia Jr., a Hearne grain dealer.

The defendant did not reveal the conviction was for a contract killing. He had been accused of accepting \$2,000 to kill Degelia.

Earlier in the day, Harrelson, the son of a Texas prison guard, and his attorney were engaged in a whispered, animated conversation in a corner of the courtroom.

"You have your bulletproof vest on?" Sharpe joked.

Harrelson snapped his fingers, laughed and quipped, "I forgot that!"

The pair strode past the defense table where Elizabeth Chagra was sitting. "Please protect me," she laughingly implored.

At the mid-day recess, Harrelson passed a note to reporters that made fun of District Attorney-elect Sam Millsap, who has vowed to seek the death penalty

for the Wood defendants in state court if they are convicted in federal court. There is no federal death penalty.

On a strip of yellow paper torn from a legal pad, Harrelson changed the name Sam Millsap to "Sam the Sap."

He added the written comment, "Come on now! Let's be honest!" and signed it "Charles V. Harrelson."

Harrelson is accused of shooting Wood May 29, 1979, for a \$250,000 payoff from Las Vegas gambler Jimmy Chagra, who was to have been tried in Wood's court on drug smuggling charges.

Chagra is scheduled to be tried later. His wife, Elizabeth, is on trial for conspiracy and obstruction of justice. Harrelson's wife Jo Ann is also on trial for obstruction.

Eighth in state to shut doors

West Texas bank closes

United Press International
MELVIN — Authorities said they hoped by today to begin paying off depositors of a small West Texas bank that collapsed under the weight of loan losses and suspected fraud depleting the bank's capital.

Ranchlander National Bank was declared insolvent Friday, marking the 40th bank in the nation to fail this year and the eighth in Texas to either fail or undergo a federal-directed change in ownership.

Serious loan losses, coupled with suspected fraudulent activities, exhausted the bank's capital fund and resulted in the insolvency," said Paul M. Hoffman, acting comptroller of the currency, who named the FDIC as receiver.

FDIC spokesman Alan Whitney estimated about 600 depositors had \$4.1 million in the bank. He said \$99,000 was not covered by the federal insurance limit or otherwise secured.

An FDIC attorney said the federal authorities would liquidate the bank's assets and declare dividends to go to the depositors and payments could begin as early as today.

"People are going around finding out exactly what we have here and how soon we are going to be able to start paying people off," said Kathy Johnson.

"I'm sorry to say we haven't got a definite statement on that (when payments would begin)," she said Friday night.

"However, we haven't seen

anything so far that would stop payments to depositors from possibly starting sometime Monday."

She said there did not appear to be many people coming to the bank's door where a notice was posted Friday morning that the bank was closed.

Examiners from the Comptroller of the Currency's office had arrived earlier in the week and, based on their findings, the bank was closed.

A local businessman said there was "not much local business" done at the bank, and many people banked in the county seat of Brady.

Jason Jacoby of Jacoby Feed and Seed said federal officials had been at the bank since Monday and "the first rumor was it was a usual audit."

Then there was a report that "someone threatened one of the auditors and that's when they brought in the guards," he said.

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<h3>BOOT STOCKINGS</h3> <p>Learn to make colorful Christmas stockings. Start a new family heirloom, the Texas boot Christmas stocking. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Thursday, Dec. 9 Time: 7:00-9:30 p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$8 Non-Student \$9.25</p>	<h3>PINE CONE WREATHS</h3> <p>Popular, decorative pine cone wreaths will be taught in this class. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Wednesday, December 8 Time: 1:00-3:00p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$6 Non-Student \$7</p>
<h3>HOLIDAY CALLIGRAPHY</h3> <p>In this class you will learn to letter your own elegant envelopes, invitation, and holiday cards using the beautiful art of italic writing. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Tuesday, December 7 Time: 7:00-9:00p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$5 Non-Student \$6</p>	<h3>LINOLEUM BLOCK PRINTING CHRISTMAS CARDS</h3> <p>In this class you will learn to hand cut a linoleum block and print it in a short workshop. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Thursday, Dec. 9 Time: 1:00-3:00p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$5 Non-Student \$6</p>
<h3>CERAMIC COOKIE ORNAMENTS</h3> <p>In this class you will decorate ceramic reproductions of holiday cookie cut outs. These ornaments add a beautiful old fashion flavor to your home. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Monday, Dec. 6 Time: 6:00-8:00p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$6 Non-Student \$7</p>	<h3>CHRISTMAS BANNERS</h3> <p>Learn the basic, beautiful art of gothic lettering to make decorative fabric banners for display in your home. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Monday, December 6 Time: 6:30-9:30p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$9 Non-Student \$10.50</p>
<h3>BREAD BOARDS</h3> <p>Learn to make functional cutting boards. These practical cutting boards can be used for bread, cheese and holiday gifts. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Tuesday, December 7 Time: 7:00-9:00p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$8 Non-Student \$9</p>	<h3>GIFT ACCESSORIES</h3> <p>In this class you will make an accessory scarf, men's tie or BBQ apron. Using permanent dyes you will learn the simple techniques of decorating your project with your original idea. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Tuesday, Dec. 7 Time: 6:30-9:30 p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$10 Non-Student \$11.50</p>
<h3>BREAD DOUGH ORNAMENTS</h3> <p>Learn the art of making bread dough tree ornaments, these beautifully colored ornaments are easy to make and last for years. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Monday, Dec. 6 Time: 8:00-10:00 p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$5 Non-Student \$6</p>	<h3>BATIK BALL ORNAMENTS</h3> <p>Learn the art of batik to create soft fabric ball ornaments. These colorful holiday ornaments will enhance your tree decorations. All workshop supplies are included in the class fee. Day: Wednesday, December 8 Time: 6:30-9:30 p.m. Instruction Fee: Student \$8 Non-Student \$9.50</p>

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