

Wife says Chagra arranged murder

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — A weeping Elizabeth Chagra said the agonizing insight gained through eight weeks of courtroom testimony has prompted her to believe her original suspicions were correct — her husband arranged the assassination of a federal judge.

In her testimony Friday, Mrs. Chagra said that a month after Judge John H. Wood was gunned down in San Antonio, her husband, Jimmy, gave her a briefcase stuffed with cash and told her to deliver it "for the judge's death."

Mrs. Chagra said: "As I look back on it now, my original suspicions might have been right, but he's the father of my children, and I chose to believe what he told me."

Mrs. Chagra, 28, testified in her own defense, hoping to persuade the jury that she believed the package of money she delivered to the Jockey Club hotel in Las Vegas had nothing to do with Wood's slaying in May 1979.

She is on trial for conspiracy and obstruction of justice in Wood's death. Chagra, now in prison for drug smuggling, will be tried for murder later.

Mrs. Chagra said she had routinely delivered gambling

debts for her husband before, but in this case she said she panicked.

"I did not want to go," she said.

She said her apprehension was relaxed when Chagra put his arms around her and said: "You know I'm just playing. This is another debt."

Mrs. Chagra, accompanied by a friend, said she made no effort at secrecy but parked directly in front of the Jockey Club and went to a room upstairs, where she left the briefcase with a young girl.

She could not say whether the girl was Teresa Starr, who testified earlier she picked up a package of money in Las Vegas for her stepfather Charles Harrelson, who is on trial as the hit-man in Wood's death.

Harrelson denies that he contracted with Chagra to kill Wood. He testified earlier that his friend Pete Kay extorted \$200,000 from Chagra by claiming he had arranged for Harrelson to kill the judge.

It was not unusual for her husband to make threats, Mrs. Chagra said. He once claimed to have killed a man who testified against Chagra at his drug-smuggling trial, she said.

Chagra also threatened Wood's life on learning the

Texas drug smuggling trial would be conducted in Wood's court, she said. Wood was nicknamed "Maximum John" for the harsh sentences he doled out in drug trials.

Wood was shot to death outside his San Antonio apartment May 29, 1979 — the day Chagra originally had been scheduled for trial. Chagra denied any involvement in the murder, Mrs. Chagra said.

But in late June 1979, Chagra took his wife aside and asked her to deliver a briefcase that contained two fat manila envelopes. He told her no one else could run the errand for him.

"He said, 'This is the money for the judge's death,'" she told the jury. "That's all he said."

By the time she left the house, Chagra convinced his wife he only had been kidding, she said.

Her husband never repeated his statement that the money was a payoff for Wood's death, but when he continued to deny involvement in the slaying, she believed him, Mrs. Chagra said.

But Mrs. Chagra said she has learned a great deal about her husband's activities in eight weeks of testimony at her trial.

She has since written a letter to Wood's widow apologizing for her role in the slaying and asking forgiveness.

Madrigal Dinner brings much music, merriment

by Gary Barker
Battalion Staff

"Guests must enter the hall with the spirit of Christmas," the court jester commanded MSC Madrigal Dinner guests before allowing them to enter the dining hall.

But even if guests entered with the spirit of "bah, humbug," the madrigal performers were quick to change their mood. The show and the meal were delivered in a vibrant Christmas mood that warmed the hearts — and stomachs — of the 300-plus people who attended the performance Saturday night.

The madrigal evening starts in the market area, where guests wait before being led into the dining hall. In the market area, guests are entertained by costumed jugglers, magicians, weavers, pottery makers and minstrels — sort of a mini, mini-Renaissance festival.

All the performers were quick to invite bystanders to participate in their activities. But the activities stopped abruptly when the court jester, clad in bright green and the traditional jester's cap, announced that dinner was about to be served.

"Guests must have clean nails," the jester commanded, reading the rules of courtesy for the evening.

"Guests must not stuff their mouths ... Guests must never leave bones on the table," he commanded in his best 17th-century English.

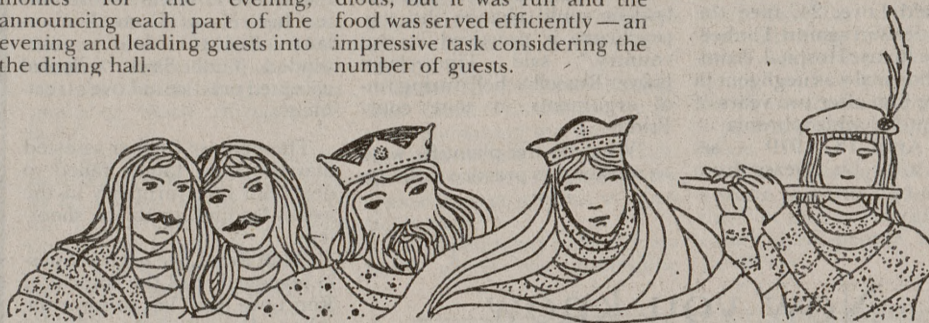
The jester, played by Greg Pattillo, served as master of ceremonies for the evening, announcing each part of the evening and leading guests into the dining hall.

and cups of wassail for each guest. Next came the boar's head carol and a mock boar's head — symbolic of the meal — was carried out.

For those who hadn't eaten all day, the fanfare could get tedious, but it was fun and the food was served efficiently — an impressive task considering the number of guests.

bles in which several vocal parts are combined so that each is independent — were performed mostly a cappella, with instrumentals at the beginning and end of each song.

Although the madrigals in-



Guests were ushered to their tables accompanied by trumpet blasts and instrumental processions. Then the fanfare began.

After the Lord and Lady of the hall were ushered in by 10 madrigal singers, they sang an invocation and the meal began.

First came the wassail song,

After the guests had eaten, the Christmas concert began. The concert consisted of carols, madrigals and short monologues telling the story of the birth of Jesus and the reaction of the shepherds.

The concert was the best part of the show. The madrigals — songs written for small ensem-

cluded several solos by the singers, the songs sizzled when the entire group sang. The different vocal parts were wonderfully integrated, evoking images of grand castles and knights.

The dinners continue Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$10 and \$11 and are on sale at the Rudder box office.

Community divided on issue

School prayer on trial

United Press International
OKLAHOMA CITY — Ann Bell stormed into the courtroom after a hallway confrontation with a Little Axe school board member with a look of fierce determination on her face.

"They're at it again," she told American Civil Liberties Union attorney Mike Salem. "They just won't leave us alone."

Salem said: "Hey, remember the First Amendment. That's what this is all about."

The confrontation between Bell and the school board members symbolized 18 months of bitter anger and frustration that is being explored in a federal jury trial that resumed this morning.

Bell and Lucille McCord, who each had two children in the rural school located 60 miles west of Oklahoma City, filed a suit in May 1981 that sought to stop religious activities at the school.

The suit also seeks to overturn a voluntary prayer law passed by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1980. Its sponsor, Rep. William Graves, R-Oklahoma

City, is representing the school board in the suit.

The central argument in the case — as U.S. District Judge Ralph G. Thompson reminded attorneys for both sides Friday — is not whether prayer should be permitted in the school, but whether it is constitutional.

The McCords and the Bells say it is not, but the board maintains that religious groups must be allowed to use the school or their constitutional rights will be denied.

Already a victim of the events is the sense of kinship once prevalent in the area and in the school, which has about 650 students.

Area residents are mostly laborers and farmers, rural people with rural ways. They generally are conservative in politics and religion — a position that has forced some of them to make hard choices.

Harold Watts, who has two children in the school, apologized when he testified Thursday for going to church "only once a week."

But he said he doesn't like the idea of religion in a public

school.

"There's a place for praying and a place for learning," he said, "and school isn't the place for praying."

Shortly after Watts finished his testimony, one of the defendants in the case stood in the hall outside the courtroom, shaking his head. "They (the plaintiffs) just don't understand," he said. "We have to do this."

McCord has taken her share of abuse for her stance. Her sons have suffered as well.

Robert McCord, 15, testified Thursday that he had been called a "devil worshiper" by his friends for not attending the weekly "sharing sessions" at the school. Those sessions often included prayer.

A clinical psychologist said Friday the McCord and Bell children all have been traumatized emotionally by classmates' criticism for not attending the sessions.

Dr. R. Vernon Enlow also said children attending the sessions would suffer emotional distress because of their controversial behavior. "Both sides will lose," he said.

The trial is expected to end by mid-week, but it is certain the hard feelings will remain.

A minister attending the trial noted an irony in the case: "Isn't it odd," he said, "that prayer, an act of love and supplication, has created so much destruction?"

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