

Two scheduled to be tried

# Gulf extortion trial begins

**United Press International**  
HOUSTON — A federal judge has decided a second Colorado resident will be tried starting Monday along with the alleged mastermind of a \$15 million bomb-extortion scheme at a Gulf chemical plant. U.S. district Judge Gabrielle McDonald told lawyers late last week that Durango, Colo., gun shop manager and survivalist Michael Worth, 34, could be tried alongside his business partner, John McBride, 46, in the first of four trials of the case. Jury selection is to begin Monday. Testimony could begin on Thursday. McBride is the man prosecutors say directed a bold plot which caused Gulf Oil Chemical Co. to evacuate its huge Cedar Bayou plant near Baytown for a week last September. Originally, he was to be tried for that alone. He and three co-defendants face 12 charges ranging from extortion conspiracy, transportation of explosives and using the mail

and the phone for unlawful purposes. Worth previously was granted two trials by Judge McDonald after defense material introduced into court records indicated McBride was supposed to have threatened Worth and two other co-defendants to assure their alleged continued involvement. Worth in this trial faces six charges based on his actions before Sept. 28, a date McBride said he began making threats. Worth's second trial will focus on six charges regarding activities after that date. Since last September, when Gulf received the threats, federal agents have marshaled 60 witnesses to testify about the complex plan to get \$15 million at Gulf's expense. Pretrial testimony indicated the original plan called for an extortion letter and three copies containing detailed instructions to be delivered to a Gulf employee who would provide the ransom at a location near Phoenix, Ariz.

"Since the delivery will require the courier driving around a metro area, have him carry a firearm; it would be a mess if he was robbed," the letter said. Court records indicate the original plan called for bombs at a Port Arthur refinery as well. They were not planted. Prosecutors said they would rely heavily on the testimony of Tim Justice, 30, who allegedly planted the bombs and has pleaded guilty to two counts in exchange for testifying against the other four defendants. He has not been sentenced. McBride business associate Michael Worth, 34, and former Texas college professor Ted McKinney, 45, were on a phone in Apache Junction, Ariz., with the Gulf employee giving directions for a money drop. They were the first arrested. Their arrests led to the arrest of McBride, Justice, and McBride's estranged common law wife, Jill Renee Bird, 37, all of Durango. She has moved since to Pasadena, Calif.

put in its offices nationwide. When the letter was received, Gulf evacuated the Cedar Bayou facility, and authorities found five crude bombs and a hole in a fence where extortionists had entered. Bomb experts detonated one of the bombs harmlessly. McBride is the man prosecutors say directed a bold plot which caused Gulf Oil Chemical Co. to evacuate its huge Cedar Bayou plant near Baytown for a week last September. Originally, he was to be tried for that alone. He and three co-defendants face 12 charges ranging from extortion conspiracy, transportation of explosives and using the mail



Cool slide

staff photo by Eric Evan Lee

Karyn Hurley, a junior physical education major from College Station, and Nancy Algert, a sophomore physical education major from Houston, oversee their

home-made water slide at a day camp sponsored by the health and physical education department last week. Hurley and Algert are both counselors at the day camp.

# Friends say Nicaraguan consul 'correct, good man'

**United Press International**  
NEW ORLEANS — To friends and political associates, Nicaraguan Consul Augustin Alfaro was a committed Catholic who kept a low profile in his private life. "He was a very correct man, the way straight, and a good man," Bolivian Consul Edgar Andivar said. Alfaro was the only Nicaraguan official to remain in this country last week under expulsion orders from the State Department. In an eleventh-hour move, he asked into the Immigration and Naturalization Service office Wednesday to apply for

political asylum rather than return to his native Nicaragua. He told reporters minutes after filing his application that he chose to defect to the United States, where he has lived for about 10 years, rather than face Nicaragua's oppression of speech, religion and the press. Since then, Alfaro and his family have disappeared from public view. The friends and business associates he left behind know little about his background and generally consider him an enigma. A number of local Nicaraguans believe his appointment to the consulate 10 months ago

stemmed from a desire of the Sandinistas to compensate him for his father's death at the hands of Anastasio Somoza forces in 1954. Alfaro's father reportedly was a former Nicaraguan national guardman who died when he and other disaffected soldiers crossed into Nicaragua from Costa Rica in an attempt to overthrow the Somoza regime. A former Nicaraguan government official living in New Orleans said Alfaro's mother went to Cuba to live for 20 years, while Alfaro was raised by his grandfather, a general in the army. She reportedly returned to her Central American home

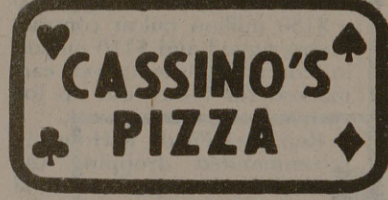
when the Sandinista faction assumed power. In New Orleans, Alfaro was popular among his friends. "He helped us when my father-in-law was thrown in jail in Nicaragua," Spanish Consul Enrique Iranzo said. Eugene Schreiber, managing director of the International Trade Mart, said Alfaro kept a low profile because of "the awkward situation he was in." "He did not have an easy job being consul here, in the same way our diplomats in Nicaragua are not in a good position," he said. "But I thought Alfaro handled himself extremely well under what were extremely difficult circumstances."

# Woman, 70, attempts to collect national debt

**United Press International**  
DALLAS — Humbly, quietly and persistently, Margaret Wick, 70, is about to reach a milestone in her effort to retire the national debt. After addressing 2,500 letters asking for contributions on behalf of the network, the National Debt Retirement Network, of which Wick comprises the Texas chapter, she has collected about \$900,000 nationwide. The national debt has a statutory ceiling of \$1.4 trillion, but a congressional staff study released Sunday pegged the actual amount at closer to \$7 trillion. Off-budget federal obligations such as farm, housing and

corporate loan guarantees constitute the largest part. A \$7 trillion national debt — assuming Congress borrows no more — would require Wick and the network to roughly duplicate their latest achievement 7,000,000 times. She remains undaunted. "I try to take it from the standpoint that if you can get a few million people to donate a modest amount apiece, you can get quite a pile of money," she said. Wick said she and her retired husband, who live in a border county with 17 percent unemployment, have not been able to contribute money to the cause, but she stressed that individuals

of limited means can help — and should. "People think that if the private sector pays the public debt, they won't be economy-minded up in Washington," she said recently. "Well, that may be true, but if they're in office, they should do their duty, darn 'em." The idea of private repayment of the public debt dates back 20 years to Dallas businessman Vaughn Cullen, who left the nation a \$20 million trust to pay the debt. That created a stir in Congress, which had to pass a special law to accept the money.



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