

# White Sands group seeks compensation

**United Press International**  
WASHINGTON — Six elderly New Mexico ranchers urged Congress Tuesday to approve up to \$40 million in compensation for 150 families displaced 41 years ago in the government's seizure of land for the first atomic bomb test.

The ranchers, along with members of the New Mexico Congressional delegation, and state and federal officials were among 13 witnesses at the oversight hearing by a Senate Energy

and Natural Resources subcommittee.

The ranchers were led by David McDonald, 82, a southern New Mexico rancher who gained national attention last year when he and his niece, Mary, returned to their home on the White Sands Missile Range.

They refused to leave for four days until members of the New Mexico delegation flew there and promised to try to reach a solution to the problem. Upon leaving New Mexico Mon-

day, McDonald said he was prepared to occupy the land again if he is unable to get restitution from Congress.

Rep. Joe Skeen, R-N.M., has introduced a bill to pay up to \$40 million in compensation to the estimated 150 ranching families displaced by the establishment of White Sands during World War II.

Skeen's bill has been referred to a House Judiciary subcommittee and hearings are expected to begin after the first of the year.

The families say they first were told their land was needed only for the duration of the war and they were allowed to return to their homes in 1948. However, they were again moved in 1952 and 1953.

In the meantime, they said, they made improvements to their homes under the assumption the homes were no longer needed by the Army. Few have received lump sum compensation for their property since the establishment of the missile range.

The 100-mile long by 40-mile wide range, the site of numerous missile development and test programs, is near Las Cruces to the southwest and Alamogordo to the east. The world's first atomic bomb was detonated in an area now known as Trinity Site on the northern part of the range on July 16, 1945. About 40 miles south of Trinity Site is an isolated landing strip where the space shuttle Columbia returned to Earth in March 1982.



*Taking it easy*

Cindi Tackitt, Battalion

The beautiful weather Tuesday lured many students out of their dorm rooms and into the

sun. These students were lounging outside the Memorial Student Center.

**PRE-LAW SOCIETY MEETING**

Wednesday, November 16

7:00 p.m. 302 Rudder

# Texas con man paroled

**United Press International**  
BIG SPRING — Legendary con man Billie Sol Estes, released from prison for a second time since his paper empire crumbled 20 years ago, said Tuesday he has no desire to be a financial wheeler-dealer again.

"I've got no ambition to build an empire again," Estes told reporters. "I'm not a man that's bitter at anybody. I done the crime. I walked alone."

Estes, 58, left the medium-security federal prison at Big Spring and checked into a Salvation Army halfway house 100 miles away in Abilene. He will live there until he starts parole on Dec. 15 for his 1979 conviction for fraud and income tax evasion. He served four years of a 10-year sentence.

A \$250 million personal for-

tune — and close associations with Texas' leading Democrats, including the late President Lyndon B. Johnson — fell apart in 1963 when he was convicted of swindling millions of dollars from West Texas banks by using non-existent fertilizer tanks as collateral.

*"I have come to believe really that I am an insane person," Billy Sol Estes says, quickly adding, "God can keep me sane."*

In 1979, Estes was convicted of two counts of fraud and tax evasion in a scheme involving the leasing of non-existent oil field equipment cleaners. A total of 22 charges were filed against Estes and Abilene businessman Raymond Horton, but most charges were dropped.

The Dallas jury found

Estes and Horton guilty of using the mail service to promote their scheme.

Asked about his current financial situation, Estes pointed to his five grandchildren and asked how anyone could believe he was broke. He said government records show him having few assets.

"They spent 23 years looking for it, but they looked in the wrong place," Estes said with a smile.

About 100 prisoners formed a line, knelt and prayed on his behalf as he walked past them on his way out of the prison. Some inmates had offered him financial assistance, he said.

Dressed in light blue slacks, a blue flowered shirt and a black-and-white checked jacket, he walked into the prison headquarters to find his wife Patsy, his eldest daughter Pam Estes and five grandchildren waiting for him.

Estes' dealings with reporters, which included a news conference at a restaurant after his re-

lease, contrasted with his departure from prison after he was paroled in 1963 swindling convictions.

"When I left prison he left in the wee hours of night," Estes said. "I didn't talk to the press. I didn't look into the past. I want to walk into the sun and forget who was 13 when he first went to prison, promote her book 'Billie Sol, The King of the Wheeler-Dealers.'"

Miss Estes said the publisher had leased the featured black limousine transported the family. Abilene and took Estes' halfway house.

Estes said he would handle final arrangements on the do some fishing and enjoy family. He said he plans to spend the rest of his life in West Texas.

"I intend to be there for my neighbors, I intend to be there for my family, I intend to be buried there," he said.

Salvation Army Capt. Turner said Estes was connected to the Abilene Salvation Army headquarters. He said residents must keep a job to stay at the house.

Calling himself "just an old man deal away from doing life on," Estes said he is changing.

"I am a compulsive person but that's not the way I want to do things from now on," he said.

He said he plans to deal with lawyers on any future business deals and that he will deal with his past habits of claiming one else's inventory as his own.

"I have come to believe that I am an insane person," former financier said, adding, "God can keep me sane."

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