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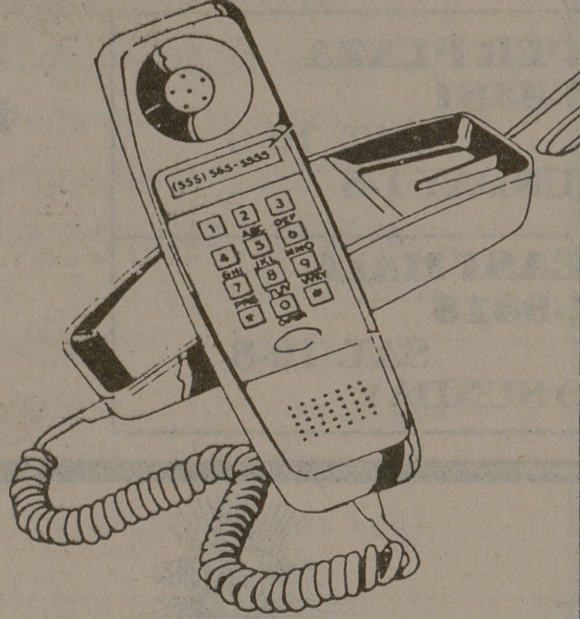
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No charges to be filed against funeral homes

United Press International

AUSTIN — The chairman of the Texas Morticians Board said Wednesday no charges will be filed against 23 funeral homes that allegedly failed to disclose complete price lists to a board member who made an undercover survey.

Grady Baskin Jr., a consumer representative on the nine-member board, shocked the panel Tuesday by disclosing he posed as a bereaved son in search of a resting place for his mother at 24 Dallas and Houston funeral homes.

He said only one funeral home complied with state regulations to provide customers with complete lists of prices ranging from the

cheapest to the most expensive funeral services.

Despite Baskin's findings, board Chairman Aubrey Fife said the board would not file charges against the homes, based on a recommendation from the board's legal counsel.

"I don't feel this is a widespread problem," said Fife, who owns a funeral home in Junction. "We've got some people who are a little confused or not quite doing it (meeting all requirements), but there's a reason for it (charges)."

Fife said the funeral home industry is undergoing a transition to try to meet recent Federal Trade Commission rules.

"The state law is tougher in some

respects, and the FTC requires some things the state doesn't require, and this has contributed to the confusion in the field," he said. "We've prepared a form that meets both state and federal rules."

Fife said forms submitted to the FTC for approval have been returned and were approved on Tuesday. He said they would be sent to all Texas funeral homes by next week.

At Tuesday's meeting of the Morticians Board, Fife refused to let Baskin present his report. However, the chairman said he was not trying to cover up the survey.

"I'm not trying to protect anybody," he said. "All board members had a copy of it (Baskin's report)."

Congressional candidate defends Reagan policies

United Press International

EL PASO — A Republican candidate for Congress from the 16th Congressional District of West Texas defended President Reagan's economic policies Wednesday and blamed Congress for the nation's \$781 billion deficit.

Banker Jack Hammond, who is trying to unseat Democratic freshman Rep. Ron Coleman of El Paso, said members of Congress have "failed to bite the bullet" on funding for staff members, travel and mail and have continuously voted for an unbalanced budget.

"The high deficit of the Reagan administration can not be blamed on the voters of West Texas or on the president," Hammond said. "The members of Congress have not cooperated with the president's economic programs."

Hammond said Reagan offered the biggest tax cut in the history of the nation, resulting in a decline in interest rates, an increase in employment "and one of the biggest, most remarkable economic recoveries in the history of the United States."

The Republican candidate criticized Coleman for mailing newsletters critical of the Reagan administration.

"Nowhere does Coleman ever say how he voted on fiscal matters and what he proposes to bring the federal deficit down," Hammond said. "The deficit is high because of people like Coleman and Tip O'Neal and even some Republicans who have not cooperated with the president's economic programs."

Hammond also lashed out at Coleman's stand on the twin-plant or in-bond assembly program. The congressman recently suggested an amendment to the U.S. tariff regulations which would encourage more industries to locate plants on the American side of the border.

Under U.S. Tariff Regulations 806 and 807, American firms may locate in foreign countries such as Mexico, Hong Kong, Korea and others. The firms import American raw materials into the foreign plants duty free. When the products are exported to the United States, the firms are charged duty only on the

value added in the foreign country. The program is popular with industrialists who take advantage of low wages in Third World countries.

"Coleman is not in touch with reality on this issue," Hammond said. "Twin plants currently employ over 4,000 people in El Paso and many of those companies have already moved their divisional and corporate headquarters to El Paso, creating even more jobs for this market."

Hammond said the elimination of twin plants will only serve to eliminate jobs for West Texans and decrease tax revenues by \$5 million.

A Coleman aide said Hammond was misquoting the congressman, who advocates an amendment to the tariff regulations to encourage industrialists to locate more plants on the American side of the border.

Coleman's remarks were made last week to a gathering of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, who blamed the twin plants for loss of American jobs.

Water flow increase approved to help development of shrimp

United Press International

AUSTIN — The Texas Water Commission has agreed to increase the fresh water flow into the Lavaca River delta estuary in a move aimed at helping the development of white shrimp.

But the commission postponed until next Tuesday a decision on how much water will be released from Lake Texana in Jackson County.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department filed the request Aug. 3, saying drought conditions had re-

duced the fresh water inflow from the Lavaca River. As a result, the Navidad River and Lavaca Bay system downstream has an unusually high salt content.

The department said the high salinities threatened the recreational and commercial use of the affected bay and river system. There have been reported sightings of salt water fish species, including bull sharks and gafftops, six miles upstream from the Gulf of Mexico.

The Parks and Wildlife Department has asked that 10,400 acre feet

of water be released from Lake Texana, saying it would lower the reservoir about one foot.

It said the 11,000-acre Lake Texana has been kept nearly full during the current drought and only 5,000 of the 75,000 acre-feet of water available for sale had been sold.

TPWD said the inflow would help the life cycle of the white shrimp, which requires low salinities in the early fall.

The emergency order application was the first ever filed by the agency to increase fresh water flows into an estuary.

Inmates challenge Social Security law

United Press International

HOUSTON — Four elderly inmates have challenged in a lawsuit a 1983 amendment to the Social Security law that denies benefits to people jailed on felony convictions.

The suit, naming Raul Garza, Juan Cantu, Dolores Gonzales and Frank Sellers as plaintiffs, was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court. The American Civil Liberties Union, which assisted in preparing the law-

suit, has asked that it be certified as a class action suit.

The suit says the General Accounting Office at one time indicated the 1983 cutoff would affect 1,376 state and federal inmates. It seeks to have benefits restored to all state and federal inmates who lost their checks as a result of the amendment.

Garza, 65, began receiving benefits in 1980, but lost them in May 1983 after being convicted of at-

tempted rape in a 1980 case. Cantu, 71, began receiving Social Security checks in May 1977 but was convicted of murder in 1982 and lost his benefits in July 1983.

Gonzales, 70, was convicted of assault in 1983 and also lost her payments. Sellers, 73, had received benefits for 10 years before being convicted of statutory rape. His checks were discontinued in June 1983.

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