

Reform

White defends prison board appointment

United Press International

AUSTIN — Gov. Mark White defended his decision to name Ruben Montemayor to the state prison board Thursday despite accusations that the former board member had a deplorable record during his earlier tenure.

Montemayor, a San Antonio attorney who served on the prison board from 1975 to 1981, was named to the spot vacated by the death of board member Pete Cortez. His selection has been criticized by a prison reform group and a legislator involved with the reform of the Texas Department of Corrections.

"At a time when TDC is undergoing one of its greatest crises, and innovative leadership is needed, the governor has seen fit to appoint a former board member whose previous record was deplorable," said Charles Sullivan, director of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants.

Rep. Ray Keller, R-Duncanville, chairman of the House Law Enforcement Committee, said that he was appalled by the appointment and that Montemayor had been notorious as a "rubber stamp" of misplaced board policies.

But Montemayor said the criticism was unjustified because he and other earlier board members had

not been informed of improprieties by prison administrators.

"Had we known there was anything going on, we would have put a stop to it," Montemayor said. "We had no knowledge anything illegal was going on."

"I don't know Mr. Keller and he does not know me. After I've served six months to a year, I am probably

"... the governor has seen fit to appoint a former board member whose previous record was deplorable." — Charles Sullivan, director of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants.

going to surprise him. I know it is an entirely new ballgame."

In defending his appointment, White said critics have been too hasty in their judgment.

"I think you ought to give the man the benefit of the doubt and give him an opportunity to see if he is going to serve properly," White said. "I'll assure you if he doesn't, he

won't be there very long."

White also repeatedly compared Montemayor's record to those of board Chairman Robert Gunn of Wichita Falls and board member Harry Whittington of Austin, two appointees of former Gov. William P. Clements who generally have been credited with spearheading prison reform efforts.

Whittington served on the board during the final two years of Montemayor's term and has been credited with casting the first dissenting vote in memory against a TDC proposal.

"I'm surprised by what I consider to be an unfair reaction in that he has done nothing different than what Bob Gunn did or What Harry Whittington did," White said. "They have the same voting record."

Sullivan's group, CURE, has been the most vocal in its opposition to Montemayor's appointment. Sullivan said Montemayor missed 20 percent of the board meetings during his tenure.

He also accused Montemayor of using his board position to further his law practice by representing the families of prison inmates.

But Montemayor said his 80 percent attendance record was "darn good" and that he had never defended prison inmates or their families while he served on the board.

Michener to aid Tech fund-raiser

United Press International

LUBBOCK — Author James Michener will be the guest celebrity Sunday at a party to help raise money for the Texas Tech home economics college. Georgia Mae Ericson, the granddaughter of one of Crosby County's first pioneers, will host the party at her ranch near Crosbyton.

The home is within sight of the ruins of a well-known rock house built by Ericson's grandfather, Hank Smith, in 1878. The house was used as a gathering point for pioneers and travelers.

"There are many historic coincidences here," said Gail House, Texas Tech's home economics director of external relations. She said Ericson will give Michener a private tour of the Crosby County Museum Sunday before the party.

Montford said he plans a private meeting with Michener before the party to discuss the history of West Texas water. House said Michener might want to use the information in the book he is writing about Texas.

The home economics college is selling keys to the Ericson ranch for \$1,000 per couple. The party

will be limited to 50 couples.

The guests will be offered nature hikes, a chuck wagon supper and country western dancing. The ranch party also will include an auction featuring an autographed set of Michener's books, an Ericson bull and a bronze sculpture made by Garland Weeks, a Texas Tech graduate.

"We do have some scholarship funds in the college, but we have students that need scholarships that we are not able to award," House said.

She said Ericson suggested a ranch party to raise scholarship money, and they agreed they needed a guest celebrity; so they chose Michener.

Ericson last year was one of two women named outstanding alumni of the home economics department. She entered Texas Tech at age 14 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in food and nutrition.

She was in the catering business in Chicago and Washington, D.C., before retiring and returning to Crosbyton. She is a member of the home economics dean's advisory council for development.

Few see historical document

United Press International

DALLAS — The 687-year-old copy of the Magna Charta bought by H. Ross Perot has been shown to a select few the past two weeks, but the computer magnate said it may be some time before the document goes on public display.

Only employees at Perot's Electronic Data Systems Inc., 120 Plano students, and a few dozen workers at a Dallas law firm have viewed the valuable piece of history.

Perot said Wednesday plans for displaying the document publicly will not be considered until details of its preservation are worked out.

That process gets underway Friday, when two authorities on preservation of rare documents from the University of Texas at Austin arrive to examine it.

Perot said Dechard Turner and Don Etherington of the UT Humanities Research Center will help him determine the best way to preserve the document.

"Vellum (a fine parchment that the document is written on) has a tendency to react negatively to Texas climates," Turner said. "It's one of the problems of great collections in the Southwest."

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