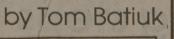
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Funky Winkerbean









Mattox trial: few events n Austin beat this show

Associated Press

AUSTIN — It's not the toughest ket in town — admission is free ut the commercial bribery trial of ttorney General Jim Mattox has een one of the most popular shows Austin this winter.

The trial, now entering its fourth eek, daily draws near-capacity rowds to the wood-paneled, third-oor courtroom of state District dge Mace B. Thurman, Jr. The trial's popularity was noted defense lawyer Roy Q. Minton, ho told one prosecution witness be-re cross examination: "I think the

llery's full this morning because ey expect us to really go at it. ost of the courtroom's 92 seats are

sizeable corps of news reporters. Three artists, colored pencils on a floor near them, take front-row ats and furiously sketch portraits f witnesses, lawyers, the judge and lattox for TV stations.

Cameras aren't allowed inside the but cameramen have

50

for new film of Mattox or one of the two dozen witnesses who've testified so far. But the news media are by no

means alone in going to court/ The trial has drawn lawyers inter-ested in watching Minton — possibly Austin's most highly regarded defense attorney - at work for the state's top law enforcement officer. The audience has included high school and college students, state senators, an occasional judge, wives of witnesses and participating lawyers

Also present is Michael R. Shan-non, a Dallas public relations man hired by Mattox. Shannon is quick to offer his interpretation of events to Among those who have filled reporters covering the trial, without even being asked.

But the star of the show is Mattox. The only Texas attorney general in recent memory to face a jury on a felony charge while in office, Mattox arrives early each day. He chats with reporters as he enters the Travis County Courthouse, then takes his acked the hallway outside, hoping place at the defense table across the

courtroom from the eight-woman, four-man jury

His salt-and-pepper hair always neatly in place, Mattox sits to the right of his lawyers, Minton and Charles Burton, while associates of their firm sit along the wall behind taking notes and running down evidence

Mattox has remained nearly expressionless as a string of witnesses put forth the prosecution's case.A yellow legal pad in hand, Mattox oc-casionally takes notes or participates in whispered conferences with his lawyers

During recesses, Mattox chats or jokes with acquaintances in the audi-ence. But it also appears the trial has begun to extract a toll. After one session, Mattox was

asked about the trial's progress. "Well, one more day's passed," he replied. "There's nothing enjoyable about it at all. I'm a lawyer, too, and it's extremely difficult for me to sit there and listen to all the testimony without getting up and asking questions.

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