

STATE AND LOCAL

Salvadoran men exchange millions for plea bargain

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI — Two men linked to El Salvador's right wing elite and accused of trying to leave the United States with \$5.9 million in cash reached a plea bargain agreement.

The money was seized in suitcases and the men were arrested Feb. 6 at Kleberg County Airport near Kingsville.

Francisco Guirola-Beeche, 34, pleaded no contest Tuesday and Oscar Rodriguez-Feo, 48, pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate a federal law barring the transport of more than \$10,000 out of the country without notifying federal officials.

Documents confiscated upon their arrest linked them to the ARENA party, controlled by Robert D'Aubuisson.

The men will go on probation if U.S. District Judge Hayden Head Jr. accepts the plea agreement June 12.

Federal prosecutors said if the agreement is approved, they will drop charges against a third man, lot Gus Maestrales, 38.

Maestrales has maintained the men were just passengers to him and he did not know what cargo his Sabreliner jet was carrying.

One of four passports Guirola was carrying listed him as an independent adviser to the Salvadoran assembly and was signed by D'Aubuisson.

Both Guirola and Rodriguez carried documents which identified them as "special counselors" to Salvadoran Attorney General Juan Francisco Guerrero, a ranking member of the ARENA party, the Corpus Christi Caller reported.

Salvadoran newspaper advertisements claimed the \$5.9 million was held on \$2 million cash bond until Head ruled April 1 he could be released for 10 percent of the bond.

Man challenges law banning sale of human organs

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A psychotherapist who wants to set up a kidney brokerage has challenged a Texas law banning the sale of human organs, claiming it interferes with the right of "free men and women to seek the best medical care available."

Dan Livengood, 38, said the proposed American Living Organ Donor Service would match people willing to sell one of their kidneys with patients needing transplants.

"This is like any service to get people together who have a mutual interest," Livengood said. "There's nothing new about this in terms of what happens medically."

A state law passed in October forbids the sale and purchase of human

kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, pancreas, eye, bone and skin. The law which becomes effective Aug. 1 carries a maximum 10-year prison sentence and a \$5,000 fine.

Livengood, who had a kidney transplant 11 years ago, filed suit in state district court Tuesday.

People are allowed to sell blood and should be able to make the same decision about an organ, Livengood argued. He also said the brokerage would increase the number of kidneys available for transplant.

"Those with financial resources can use market incentives to promote their medical need and free up more 'gift of life' kidneys for the less fortunate," Livengood said.

HUD investigates builders for fraud

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Department of Housing and Urban Development has begun an extensive investigation into Houston's home-building industry, focusing on fraud in obtaining Federal Housing Administration loans for home buyers, officials say.

Houston FHA Director Bill Robertson and Johnny O. Lee Jr., HUD's regional inspector in Fort Worth, told the Houston Chronicle the investigation is underway.

Sources, within HUD and among Houston builders, say those violations referred to as double contracting are being investigated. According to the Chronicle, the violations include:

- Giving unqualified buyers cash to make down payments, then "padding" that amount into the home

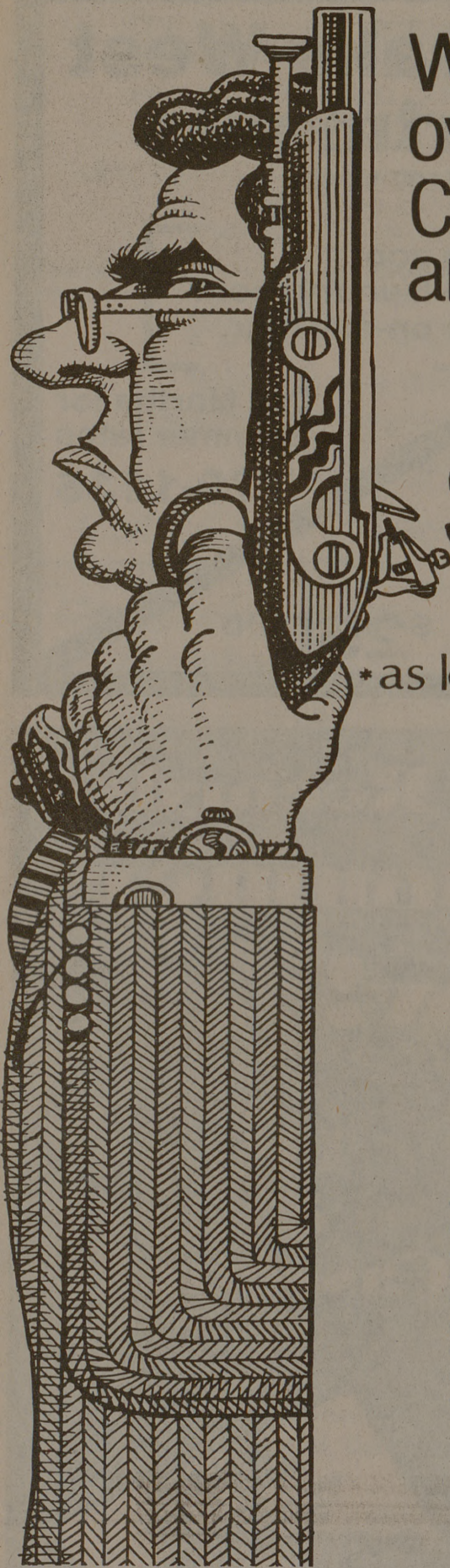
price. FHA rules forbid down payments obtained by loans.

- Creating bogus contracts with landscapers and others, so buyers could recoup all or part of the down payment and adding those amounts to the purchase price of the homes.

- Falsifying loan applications, so those with faulty credit ratings could qualify for FHA loans.

- Paying people with acceptable credit ratings to act as "agents" for those with poor credit, so FHA loans could be obtained.

FHA, which insures loans issued by private institutions, requires a 3 percent down payment from buyers planning to live in the house and 10 percent from those who are purchasing as an investment.



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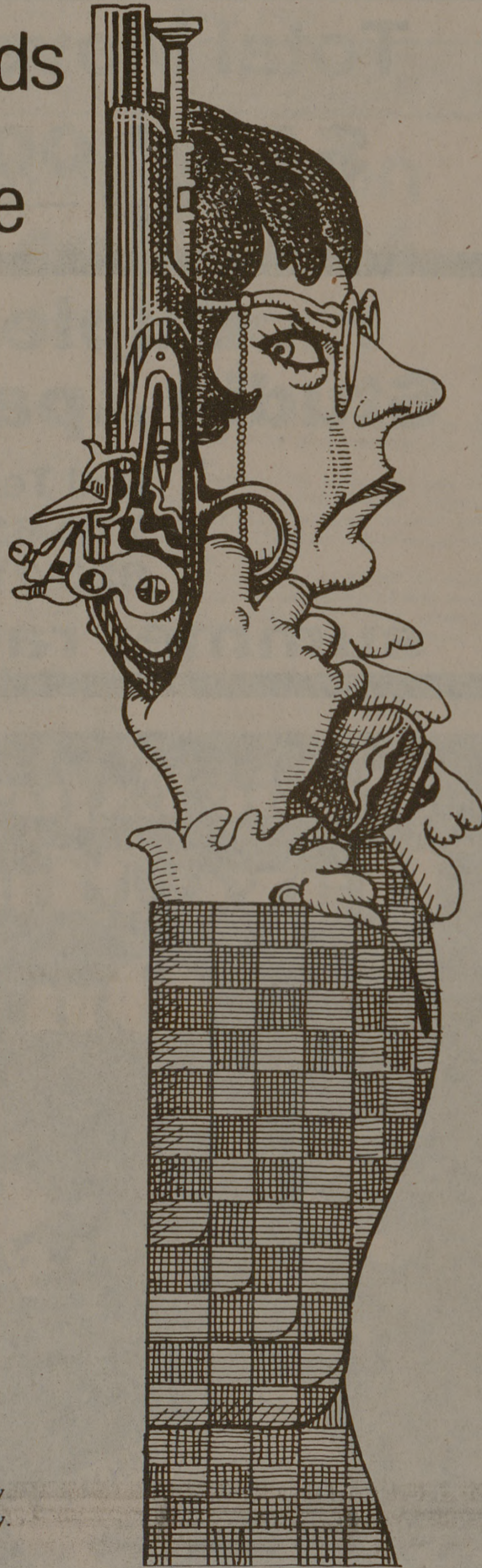
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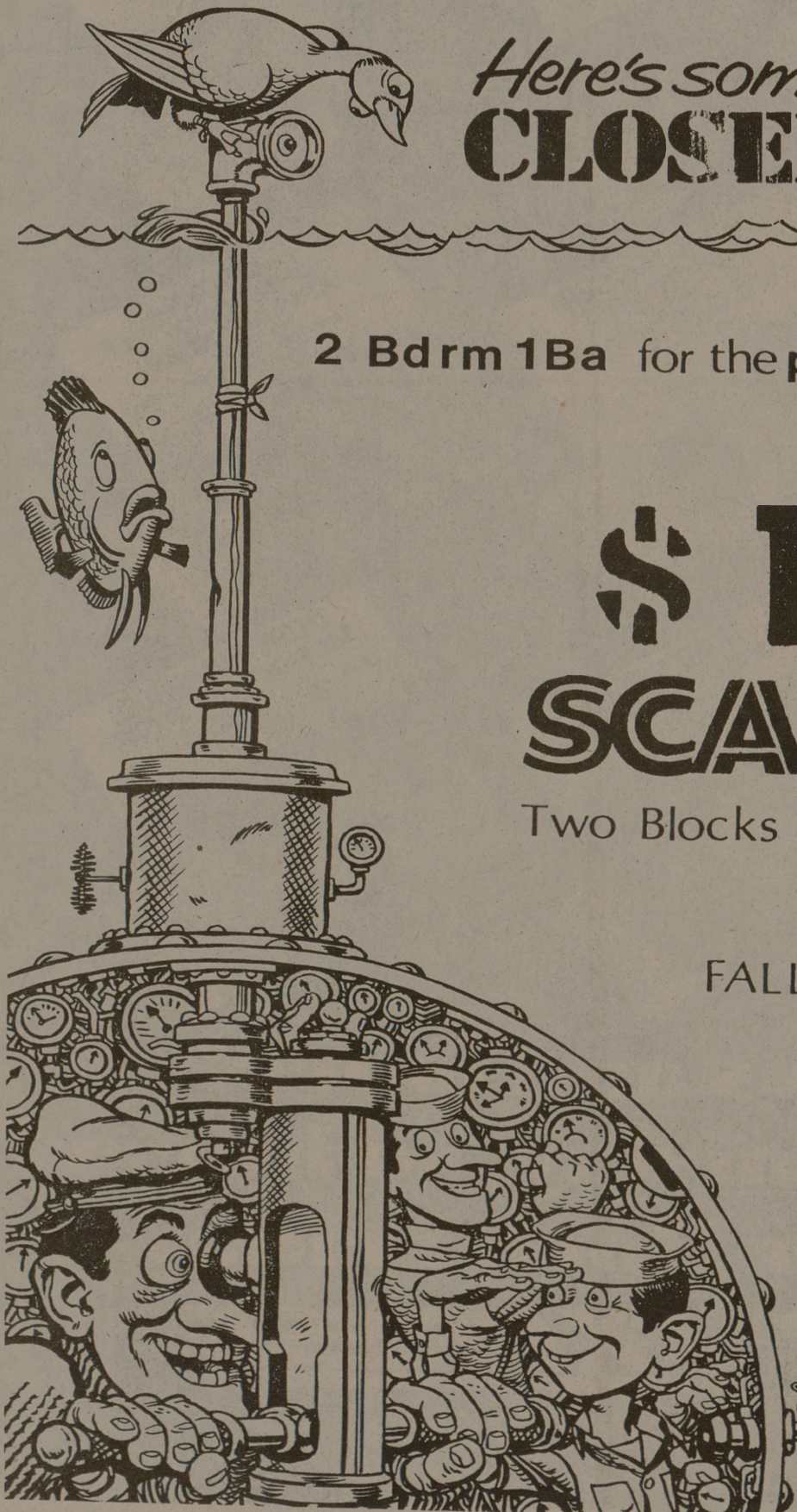
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