

Warped

by Scott McCullar



Lawyer criticises Maddox's request of mail ban in TDC

Associated Press
HOUSTON — An attorney for Texas prison inmates says the state's attempt to restrict mail between prisoners is "preposterous" and a "hysterical reaction" to violence behind bars.

Saying Texas prison gangs "recruit and organize and plan assaults and murders through the mail," Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox last week asked two federal judges to permanently bar most correspondence between inmates.

"Through privilege of correspondence, inmates organize illegal activity and foment disruption," a lengthy legal brief filed Friday in federal court says.

But Donna Brorby, a lawyer for prisoners waging a long-standing legal battle with the Texas Department of Corrections, denounced the state's motion and termed it "a hysterical reaction" to inmate violence.

"I think it is preposterous to argue that by restricting inmates' mail, TDC is going to do anything meaningful to end inmate violence," she said.

Twenty-seven inmates have been killed by other convicts this year in the Texas prison system, the nation's second largest. Last year, 25 died in outbreaks of inmate violence.

Brorby said inmate gang members would get around any corre-

spondence restrictions by using intermediaries in the "free world" to send mail to other prisoners.

She said tight restrictions on inmate mail would be "punishing everybody for the acts of a very few" and would do little to end violence.

"Inmates are, after all, human beings," she said. "It seems that what the state wants to do would be a blanket restriction and unfair punishment."

The state is now proposing that inmate-to-inmate correspondence be limited to immediate family members, parties or witnesses in the same legal action and those in "exceptional circumstances."

Boy-genius in college at age 9

Associated Press
HOUSTON — Like any 9-year-old, David Huang likes He-Man and Scooby-Doo cartoons.

He also enjoys classes in organic chemistry and microcomputer graphics at the University of St. Thomas.

Unlike most 9-year-olds, David is a genius. At age 6 his IQ measured 159.

"My dad wants me to graduate from Rice University," says David, who's been enrolled at St. Thomas for a year. "But I want to graduate from here. Everybody is warm, nice and friendly."

David, whose mother helps him cross the city streets that run through the campus, expects to graduate from St. Thomas at 12 or 13 and remain for advanced studies on his way to a doctorate and an M.D.

David, however, may opt to attend medical school at John Hopkins University in Maryland.

"But they won't take me until I am 12," he says.

Mrs. Huang says David does not avoid the occasional spanking — like the one he got when he filled the bathroom with bubbles from a bottle of baby shampoo.

Tip leads police to 'Over-The-Hill Gang'

Associated Press
GRAND PRAIRIE — An anonymous tip helped police in this city west of Dallas wrap up a five-year-old murder they now blame on two members of the "Over-The-Hill Gang."

Grand Prairie police say the two men who killed Ken Smartt were both slain shortly after they shot Smartt, 52, and robbed his finance company of about \$7,000.

Detective Richard Bender said a Sept. 6 informant's tip linked the July 18, 1980, murder to a group of elderly and middle-aged men known as the "Over The Hill Gang."

Authorities say the gang is responsible for a number of armed robberies in the area in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Bender said members of the gang were "very, very heavy into heroin use" and mainly robbed grocery stores.

The gang members were identified as Gerald Clifford Howard, 43 at the time of the murder, and John Ernest Lucas, then 42.

Bender said the informant told police that Howard and Lucas told him they shot and robbed Smartt.

The detective said Howard got out of a Texas prison on Feb. 5, 1980 and Lucas escaped from a Kansas prison on June 4, 1980. He said the pair came to Grand Prairie on July 17, 1980, the day before Smartt was slain.

"A witness told me that Lucas did the shooting," Bender said. "He was supposedly mad because he didn't think he got as much money as he thought he should have (in the robbery)."

Bender said he traced the men to Pineville, La., where they teamed up with a third man. He said the trio took \$24,000 in a grocery store robbery on July 20, 1980.

They then went to San Antonio, where Lucas rented an apartment, Bender said. On July 26, police found Lucas at the apartment, murdered.

"The informant said there had been a lot of dissension between Lucas and Howard," Bender said. "Lucas accused Howard of freezing up on the job and chickening out."

Howard's body was found Oct. 17, 1980 in Montgomery County. He had been shot twice in the chest and once in the abdomen, Bender said.

A man who helped Howard kill Lucas pleaded guilty to the murder and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He is now free, Bender said.

Bender said the anonymous informant contacted police through the local Crime Stoppers hotline.

"He told me that he didn't come forward (earlier) because he was afraid of these people (Over The Hill Gang members)," Bender said.

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