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Woman operates unusual business

Family offers hat-cleaning service

WICHITA FALLS (AP) — Stanley Rater freely admits being a hatter was about the furthest thing from her mind 12 years ago, but today the Clay County woman is part of a vanishing breed — those who clean and repair western hats.

She and her husband, Johnny "Preach" Rater, have owned and operated Huskey Hat Co. since 1976, when an investment partner wanted to be bought out.

Rater, who had worked in the business on Saturdays, taught his wife the hatter's trade so he could continue to look after his construction business and ranching interests.

Today, the small family firm — one of two daughters and five sons help out when needed — cleans about 2,000 cowboy hats annually for customers from all over the country. Mrs. Rater says about 75 percent of her business, including the sheriff's department in Greensburg, S.C., is from out of town.

She says it takes from two to three weeks to clean a hat because it must first be soaked in a naphtha solution, given a soap and water bath, blocked, depowdered and finally "cooked."

Mrs. Rater says the cleaned hats are not blocked until their owners

call for them. "That way, we can give them the crease they want," she says.

She says if a woman brings a man's hat in to be cleaned, she always asks the age of the owner. "The young ones always want a flat brim,

bigger spot," she says. "The best thing they can do is to put dry, kitchen cornmeal on the spot and rub it. This absorbs most of the oil."

She repairs cloth hats, but she only cleans felt cowboy hats.

"He needs one to work in, as for knockin' about like going to drink coffee and a third for a funeral hat," she says. "The one that's most expensive usually kept in a box."

The most unusual hat she ever asked to work on was a top hat, made about 1909.

"These people found it in a attic," she says. "It was in a room which is an antique today, and I was afraid to clean it for fear it would crumble even though it was quality felt."

She says felt is made by taking down under fur of such animals as Belgian hare, beaver (the finest), nutria and muskrat, rolling

kneading it in steam and then rolling it to form the felt.

She says felt is the strongest known because every fiber is locked in every direction with fibers. It also is more impervious to water than any other fabric and most resilient, she says.

She explained that higher quality felt makes the hat easier to run from 3X to 20X, with the costing about \$300 a hat.

"(A man) needs one (hat) to work in, another for knockin' about, like going in to drink coffee, and a third for a church and funeral hat."

— Stanley Rater, owner of Huskey Hat Co.

As they get older, maybe into their 60s, they prefer a slight turn up, and when they're in their 70s and 80s they want a flat brim because they've always worn a hat for protection from the sun," she says.

She says the major ingredient of her cleaning process is a "secret" formula discovered by the founder of the company, Eddie Huskey, in cooperation with an unknown chemist. The Raters were able to duplicate it.

Mrs. Rater says there are only two stains the "secret" can't handle, crude oil and cattle blood.

"A lot of people try to remove an oil stain by using some kind of spot remover, but all it does is just make a

In the cleaning process, Mrs. Rater removes and replaces a hat's lining, sweatband and headband.

Colored hats don't clean well because they often contain a dye that tends to spot, she says, although black gives little trouble.

"Men are by far the easiest to please," she says. "Most men treasure their hats, and they should for what they cost today. The other day, a man brought his hat in to be repaired and says his kid got hold of it. That told me he wasn't a hat man because a man who is won't let anybody else touch his hat."

And she says a real hat man had at least three hats.

Heads of Peru, Mexico urge more Latin American unity

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The presidents of Mexico and Peru Tuesday urged greater Latin American unity to confront the region's problems, which they said go deeper than the crushing burden of foreign debt.

"It is not only the problem of the foreign debt or the region's conflicts that are our challenges at the present," President Miguel de la Madrid said at a formal welcoming ceremony for Peruvian President Alan Garcia at the National Palace.

De la Madrid said general faults in the international economic system "obstruct an integral development capable of joining progress with justice and democracy."

For his part, Garcia said foreign debt is not the only problem linking Latin American countries.

"Nor is it only ideological intervention or the political guardianship in Central America," Garcia said. "It

also is the moral model of material consumerism, which ties us to one industrial form only and one financing only, and that is why we have become indebted."

The two leaders held their first round of private talks Tuesday, with a state dinner scheduled Tuesday evening. They plan to talk again today, and Garcia plans to leave Mexico Thursday.

Officials from both countries have said the talks would concentrate on the foreign debt problems affecting both countries and the Central American situation, as well as bilateral trade and policy issues.

De la Madrid also said at the welcoming ceremony that plans for Latin American cooperation should not be expected as an automatic or inevitable step.

"It is a daily task that we push here and now with your visit to Mex-

ico, and wherever work goes on for continental unity," he said.

Garcia told reporters on his arrival Monday night at the Mexico City International Airport that the adoption of Latin American nations of strong positions to face their problems "is a road without return."

He also called for Latin American unity.

"No one country alone can face imperialism, which is an international system," Garcia said.

The young Peruvian leader is a popular figure in Mexico, known widely for his position limiting Peru's foreign debt payments to 10 percent of its annual export revenue.

This is his second presidential visit to Mexico. He brought an aid shipment to Mexico City during his first visit in September 1985 after it was devastated by earthquakes.

Austin officers net 20 players in game raid

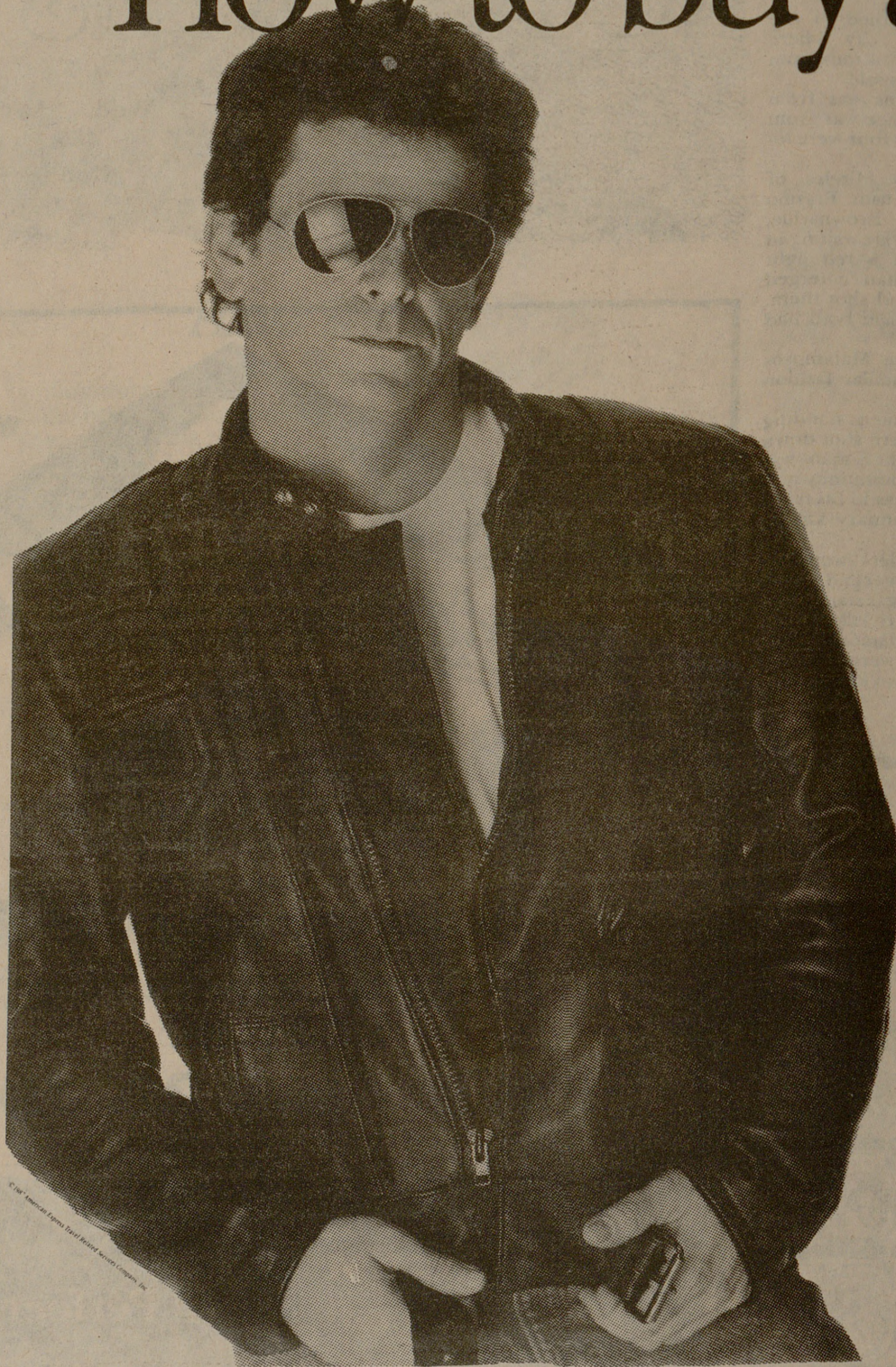
AUSTIN (AP) — Twenty players, who sheriff's deputies were promoting a \$500,000 "plane" pyramid game, were netted in a raid on a Lake Travis house.

The Monday night raid about 40 officers, led by the Travis County Sheriff's Department, came after a deputy was recruited to join the game.

Officers said that in the Travis game, one of about 100 they suspect are operating in Travis County, "passengers" are \$1,500 each on a ticket and told they would receive \$100 when they became "pilots" after they had recruited others to join the game.

The people arrested were charged with promoting an endless-game scheme, a misdemeanor punishable with 180-day jail sentence and \$1,000 fine.

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