

# Defunct Texas Civil Liberties Union battles ACLU over direction, future

HOUSTON (AP) — A rather uncivil war is rocking the American Civil Liberties Union in Houston and across Texas, pitting the national ACLU against some Texas members.

Barry Steinhardt, the ACLU's assistant national director, said the conflict stems from the fundamental question of how the organization will protect civil liberties in Texas.

Steinhardt said the national office is moving to curb damaging infighting among its Texas members and resurrect a state organization destroyed by an "implosion."

The ACLU's old state affiliate, the Texas Civil Liberties Union,

collapsed under the weight of controversy and debt. It has been replaced by a new organization, the ACLU of Texas, and the state headquarters has been moved from Austin to Houston.

Some local ACLU leaders contend the national organization wants to centralize its control just when the times are demanding that it build greater grass roots support, the Houston Chronicle reported Sunday.

In a legal skirmish spawned by the conflict, the Houston-based Clark Read Foundation, which provides financial support for the local ACLU chapter, is battling to keep the national ACLU from

gaining control of its assets.

The foundation has asked a state district court to rule that neither the national ACLU nor the newly reconstituted state affiliate has a legal right to take its property, which includes an old house that serves as ACLU headquarters and an undisclosed sum of cash.

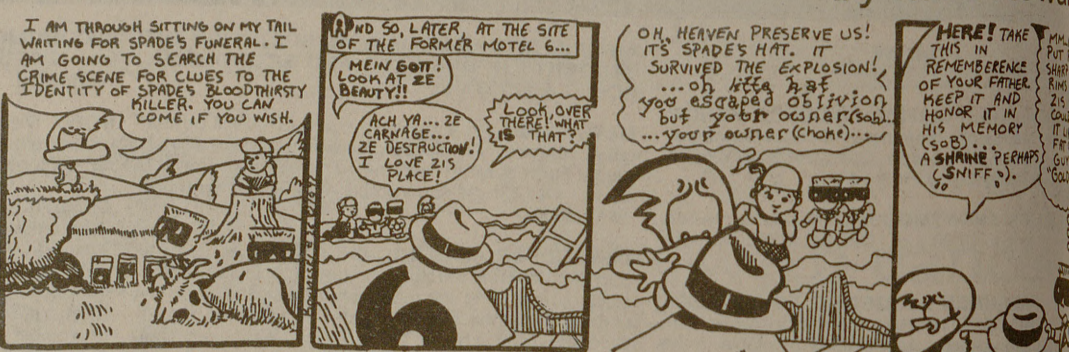
Those directly involved in the case declined to discuss the issues, the Chronicle reported.

But Joe Cook of Dallas, ACLU's North Texas regional director, defended the national organization.

The ACLU "has a policy that money raised in the name of the ACLU belongs to the ACLU," he said.

## Spade Phillips, P.I.

by Matt Kowals



(the story so far...)

by thomas deen



## FISH OUT OF WATER

by GREGORY GOWAN



whoop

by William



# Japan cracks down on mob Instigates laws to stop crime

OSAKA, Japan (AP) — He introduces himself with a polite bow and places two business cards on the table — one identifying him as a corporate executive, the other as a gangster. The money is good, he says. The living comfortable. But life in the mob is getting harder, following government plans to crack down on more than 47,000 people deemed members of "violence gangs," and about 40,000 others with new anti-crime laws starting March 1. "Times are changing," said the gangster, as he apologized for asking that his name not be revealed

in print. "We are being forced to go underground." His card and its golden, diamond-shaped emblem indicate he is a ranking member of the Yamaguchi-gumi, a 30,000-member underworld group that reaches all of Japan, and beyond. Its rapid expansion in the 1980s upset the gangs' balance of power and led to shootings and other violence that outraged a country proud of its low crime rate and safe streets. Police and gangsters agree the new law, if strictly enforced, could radically alter the way crime syndicates do business.

Traditionally, the gangsters — called "yakuza" — earn income from small-time gambling, street vending operations, protection and loansharking rackets, and the sex and drug trades. But increasingly, they are playing the stock and real estate markets and becoming "fixers" in private disputes — helping land developers evict stubborn tenants or "negotiating" settlements after accidents. "Japan isn't like the United States," said the gangster. "We don't have so many lawyers, and it takes forever to get through the courts. So people come to us."

## Specialists advise debtors of rights

Continued from Page 1 debt must be paid. People who find themselves unable to pay a debt should act quickly, a specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service advised. "Do not just ignore the fact that you owe money," said Joyce Cavanagh, extension family economics specialist. "Creditors prefer that people contact them when they are having financial trouble. Creditors are usually willing to lower monthly payments for a while." If people reach a point where

they cannot pay their bills then credit counseling is available, Cavanagh said. Counseling services can contact creditors and work out repayment schedules. Some people do not know their rights concerning debt collection, and collecting agencies know that, she said. "Debtors need to know their rights," Cavanagh said. "The 1977 Fair Debt Collection Practices Act states that debt collection agencies should not make threatening or harassing telephone calls." Debt collection agencies cannot call people collect at work if they request it or call or visit before 8

a.m. and after 9 p.m., she said. They also cannot talk about the debt of a person with other people. "This law only applies to collecting agencies," Cavanagh said. "Businesses that collect their own payments are exempt." If a person has been a victim of such actions then they may send in complaints to the Federal Trade Commission or may seek legal help from the state attorney general's office. Complaints may be sent in writing to the FTC regional office, 100 N. Central Expressway, Suite 500, Dallas, TX 75201.

# Weather deters revelers; officials content with Mardi Gras turnout

GALVESTON (AP) — One-third fewer revelers than last year attended the first weekend of Mardi Gras in Galveston, but officials said they were pleased with the turnout considering the bad weather. About 160,000 people came to the island city Friday and Saturday, compared to 240,000 last year. But the test of Mardi Gras appeal will be next weekend, when officials hope to surpass the 500,000-person crowd that packed the island last year. Amid the brilliant colors and fantastic sights, Galveston is

launching its Mardi Gras celebration with a fervor that disguises a deadly serious wrestling match. It's a fight between this city and the hard times that have kept it in a steady economic decline during recent years. Tourism is a \$400 million-a-year business for Galveston. "I can't speak for the rest of the people on the Strand, but we've had one of the best years ever," said Bill Fullen, who operates restaurants, a gift shop and the Strand Emporium, a combination delicatessen and gourmet food and wine shop. Business is brisk at most of the

Galveston Historical Foundation's attractions, as well. Carole Ketterhagen, the Galveston Convention and Visitors Bureau director who left Jan. 8 to take a similar job in Florida, said requests for information about Galveston rose dramatically to 100,500 in 1991. "I think the image of Galveston as a great destination has gotten out more strongly in the last two or three years," Ketterhagen said. "All the market segments are really coming together well, from meetings and conventions to leisure travel and motor coach groups."

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