

STATE

Last two black residents of Vidor leave all-white town

The Associated Press
VIDOR — Ugly catcalls have taken their toll on Bill Simpson and John DecQuir. After just six months, Vidor's only remaining black residents are packing their bags, frightened by too many instances of harassment.
 "There are good people here, don't get me wrong," said Simpson, a 7-foot, 300-pound transplant from nearby Beaumont. "But it's overshadowed by the negativity, the hostility, the bigotry of this town."
 A federal judge last year ordered the eastern Texas town, home to 11,000 whites, to desegregate its 70-unit public housing complex. A few blacks moved in last Feb., becoming Vidor's first black residents in at least 70 years.

When they walked through town, they were hailed with racist slurs. Simpson, 37, and DecQuir, 59, are the last of the arrivals to leave. They were preceded by two black women and their five children, who fled in July.
 DecQuir moved out some of his belongings Tuesday — he's heading back to his native Beaumont — and Simpson is planning to depart on Wed. to an undisclosed location.
 While no one has physically attacked them, the men say the derisive yells, the threats and the oppressive fear have become all too much to bear.
 "I've had people who drive by and tell me they're going home to get a rope and come back and hang me, physical gestures, derogatory words," Simpson said.

The police department said someone phoned in a bomb threat six months ago, prompting them to post a 24-hour guard at the housing complex.
 Simpson and DecQuir rarely leave their apartments, which are shielded behind the housing estate's chain-link perimeter fence.
 "It's too much pressure," said DecQuir. "People just won't leave it alone."
 By that he also means the media. Journalists from as far away as Australia have come to town to meet the men.
 The two moved to Vidor as the result of a 1980 class-action lawsuit filed against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by three blacks who were refused available public housing because of their race.

Funeral set for UTEP track athlete

The Associated Press
DALLAS — Services are Wednesday for Travis Thomas, a standout college track athlete at the University of Texas-El Paso who died in a car crash that also took his mother's life.
 Thomas, a 20-year-old UTEP junior and his mother, Catherine Thomas, 46, were killed Friday morning on their way to the school when Travis fell asleep at the wheel and the car veered off the road and flipped over three times.
 Joint services for Travis and Catherine Thomas are scheduled for 11 a.m. Wednesday at Riverside Baptist Church in South Dallas. They will be buried in Laurel Land Memorial Park.
 Friends, coaches and teammates from South Oak Cliff High School and UTEP were saddened by the death of a student whose future looked bright on and off the track.
 "He was the kind of person who lit up a room

when he walked in," said Bob Kitchens, head track coach for UTEP.
 Kitchens had recruited Thomas from South Oak Cliff High School two years ago. He received an athletic scholarship and went on to lead his track team to several major victories including a first place performance in the 400-meter Texas Relays.
 Last spring Thomas lost focus and his grades began to fall and he left school, Kitchens said. After taking several summer classes, Thomas stopped by to tell his coach that he had gotten things together and would be returning in the fall.
 "He was really focused and determined to come back," Kitchens said. "He did it all by himself."
 At a track meet in April, Thomas told his best friend and teammate Andrew Tynes that he was looking forward to rejoining the team.
 "He said he couldn't wait to come back to school," said Tynes, a junior who ran the second leg on the relay teams.

"He said he couldn't wait to come back to school."
 — Bob Kitchens, UTEP head track coach

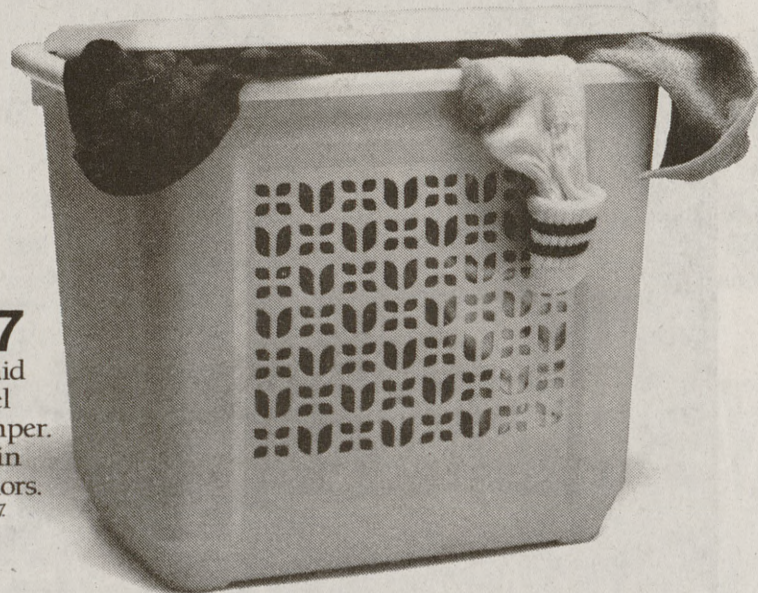
Psychiatric hospital pays S.A. teen \$300,000 after FBI investigation

The Associated Press
SAN ANTONIO — A teenager whose detention in a mental hospital led to state and federal investigations of private psychiatric institutions has been awarded \$300,000 in a lawsuit settlement with the hospital.
 Sid and Marianne Harrell, the boy's grandparents and legal guardians, agreed in court documents as part of the settlement for Jeremy Harrell not to reveal the amount awarded.
 The \$300,000 was paid "into the registry of this court for the sole use and benefit of Jeremy Harrell," stated an agreement sanctioned by state District Judge Michael Peden and quoted Tuesday in the San Antonio Express-News.
 The Express-News first reported the April 1991 apprehension of Harrell, then 14.
 Ensuing state investigations resulted in a legislative package of mental-health industry reform

measures that Gov. Ann Richards signed into law in June. The reforms take effect Wednesday.
 Defendants agreeing to the lawsuit settlement with the Harrell family included Colonial Hills Hospital of San Antonio, which closed May 1992, and its corporate owners, National Medical Enterprises of Santa Monica, Calif.
 Last week, the FBI raided National Medical's corporate offices in Santa Monica and four regional offices, including one in Dallas.
 The agreement with the Harrell family stated the Harrells "understand that this is a compromise of a doubtful and disputed claim and that such payment is not to be construed as an admission of liability on the part of any of the (hospital, its corporate owners and others), each of whom expressly deny any liability."
 Hospital officials consistently claimed Jeremy Harrell voluntarily accompanied two private security officers to the hospital and that his grandparents agreed.

But the grandparents charged that the two officers, working for the now-closed Sector One Mental Health Services, intimidated them by threatening that the boy could be held longer at Colonial Hills if the family forced them to obtain a mental health apprehension warrant.
 Harrell was held five days and released only after U.S. Rep. Frank Tejeda of San Antonio, obtained a court order. Tejeda then was a state senator and the family's attorney.
 In May 1992, Colonial Hills Hospital was found guilty of wrongful seizure of the teen-ager, a misdemeanor, and fined \$10,000.
 After the Harrell case was reported, state Sen. Judith Zaffirini, along with Sens. Mike Moncrief, and Chris Harris, were named to a special state Senate investigative panel that held public hearings on mental health issues in San Antonio, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston and Austin.

College Prerequisites.



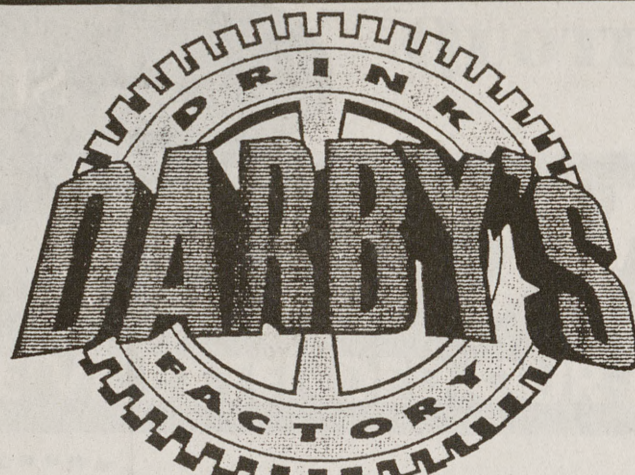
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