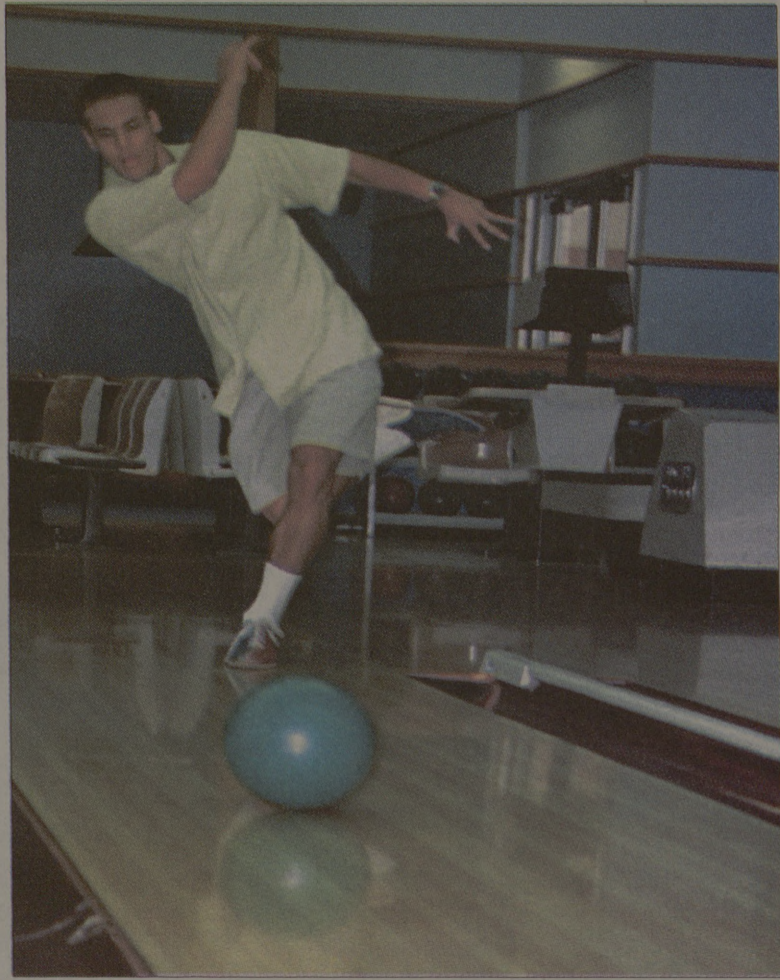


Kingpin



Stephen Hodges, a sophomore accounting major, bowls for a strike Wednesday afternoon at the Memorial Student Center.

STEPHANIE CORLEY/The Battalion

Former Webb County sheriff pleads guilty for attempt to fix criminal case outcome

LAREDO (AP) — A former Webb County sheriff's deputy pleaded guilty Wednesday in a criminal case-fixing conspiracy. Robert Rodriguez pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge George Kazen in Laredo Wednesday morning, admitting to taking a bribe from a defendant charged with drug possession in exchange for a promise that the outcome of his drug case would be minimized. Rodriguez, 32, faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. He admitted that from September 1996 to April 1997 he and at least two co-conspirators arranged for a drug defendant to be referred to the 49th Judicial District's pre-trial diversion program in ex-

change for \$2,500.

The drug defendant was a person arrested by the Laredo police for possession of cocaine. The unidentified person contacted Rodriguez through another person.

Rodriguez conspired with an unnamed investigator with the district attorney's office for Webb and Zapata Counties whom he paid to achieve a favorable outcome, authorities said.

Authorities said Rodriguez told the drug-case defendant that if he cooperated, his probationary period would be about six months. If the defendant didn't pay up, he could face at least two years' probation.

The U.S. Attorney's Office filed

the criminal information against Rodriguez on Tuesday. He is the latest Webb County official to come under scrutiny of federal prosecutors.

Starting on May 29, federal agents executed search warrants on the homes and offices of 14 Laredo officials and others, including District Attorney Joe Rubio and former State District Judge Ruben Garcia. Garcia pleaded guilty last month to taking bribes for fixing court cases in connection with the federal probe.

Another sheriff's department employee, Rosa Elias, pleaded guilty Friday to illegally obtaining someone's criminal record from an FBI database and then selling the information.

Texans cross state lines for Powerball jackpot

HOUSTON (AP) — Forget Wednesday night's Lotto Texas drawing that dispensed a paltry \$4 million to anyone who had the six winning numbers.

Texans have been crossing into Louisiana and New Mexico to spend \$1 a ticket for a chance at the Powerball jackpot, which offers a world record \$250 million jackpot.

In Connecticut, New Yorkers were reported to be standing in line for nine hours to buy chances at the \$250 million, Doug Orr, spokesman for the Multistate Lottery Association, told the *Houston Chronicle*.

The organization runs Powerball games in 20 states and the District of Columbia, Orr said.

Trucker Dave Loupo drove a jet fuel truck all day Monday, but decided he could put in a couple of hundred more miles from his Houston home to pick up tickets for himself, his boss and some friends.

"All day long I just kept thinking, that's a quarter of a billion dollars," he said. "That is just a powerful lot of money. If I won, neither I nor anybody in my whole family — both sides — would ever want for anything again. And a lot of people in Houston would never want for anything again."

The Louisiana Lottery Association reported Tuesday that 1,800 Powerball tickets were being sold in the state every minute.

"We had people sleeping in the parking lot last night so they could be first in line," the manager of Tobacco Plus, in the tiny town of Toomey, four miles inside Louisiana on Interstate 10, said.

By early afternoon Tuesday, a line snaked out of the little convenience store and gas station out into the parking lot.

Jane Butler, who traveled from Houston with her twin, Jan Fontenot, said she's sure of good luck. "I had a dream about a green alligator," she said. "That must mean luck."

Officials said chances of winning the jackpot are one in 80 million, compared to one in 15.8 million for winning the Lotto Texas jackpot, which has been as high as \$77.1 million.

There's a one in 35 chance that a \$1 Powerball ticket will win at least something. A correct powerball wins \$3. Five correct regular numbers without the powerball win \$100,000.

Powerball officials aren't yet predicting how big the jackpot could be on Saturday if nobody chooses the numbers drawn at Powerball headquarters in West Des Moines, Iowa. It would probably reach \$350 million to \$400 million.

There is an 85 percent chance the jackpot will be won, officials said.

Like Texas, the Powerball jackpot can be paid out over 25 years. Most Texans who crossed into Louisiana Tuesday were buying the cash option, however, which instantly pays about half of the jackpot.

For the cash option, after taxes, that would mean a check for almost \$84 million.

Louisiana Powerball outlets are allowed to sell the tickets from 5 a.m. to midnight every day of the week. The lines, retailers report, get longer before sales on the drawing stop at 9 p.m.

Man involved in fatal stabbing of victim who offered him aid given life sentence

DALLAS (AP) — A homeless man has received a death sentence for the 1997 fatal stabbing of a widow who had invited the man and a companion into her home and offered them food.

A Dallas County jury deliberated about 45 minutes Tuesday before deciding on lethal injection for John Wade Adams, 35. His companion, Gregory Edward Wright, 32, was sentenced to death in December for his role in the crime.

Donna Duncan Vick, 52, was stabbed to death in the bedroom of her DeSoto home.

Adams testified that he saw Wright stabbing Vick. But prosecutors said both men killed Vick and looted her home so they could buy crack cocaine.

Juror John White told *The Dallas Morning News* that jurors concluded that both men participated in the attack.

The victim's son, Jerry D. Blanton, appealed the death sentence.

"It is the right decision," Blanton said. "The state of Texas are sick and tired of the killing people on our streets and they're begging for a stop to it one way or another."

"A woman full of unconditional love, Duncan Vick, came face to face with anger and greed in the form of Gregory Edward and John Wade Adams," Dallas Assistant District Attorney Greg Davis said in his closing statement to the jury.

"She was ours once," Davis said.

"She was our neighbor. She was our mother. She was our grandmother. She is all gone."

Inspectors say bus meant to protect mentally retarded residents from heat endangered them

AUSTIN (AP) — A shuttle bus meant to keep mentally retarded residents at a state-run school from having to walk around in the summer's heat instead put them in danger because it had no air conditioning, according to inspectors.

The inspectors, who boarded the bus on July 17, said temperatures on bus running on the Austin State School campus reached as high as 110 degrees.

It was over 105 degrees while the bus was moving. Public health officials say heat stroke can be imminent for people exposed to temperatures of 105 degrees or hotter.

According to the inspectors, nearly 40 people were subjected to the sweltering rides, some for up to 30 minutes at a time.

The school's Medicaid funds, which pay up to 85 percent of expenses, already had been suspended

because of other problems when the bus was inspected. The school has been ordered to resolve those problems by mid-August.

If it corrects all reported problems, the school would receive all of the withheld funds.

Austin State School officials immediately stopped using the bus.

Although the air conditioning had been broken for nearly two years, it was not repaired because the \$7,000 cost was viewed as prohibitive, said Doug Ferris, director of safety and transportation at the school.

"When I realized how long they stayed on that bus, I was flabbergasted," said Ruth Snyder, whose daughter lives at Austin State School but does not ride the bus. "I just couldn't believe nobody cared enough to do anything about it."

After human-services agency

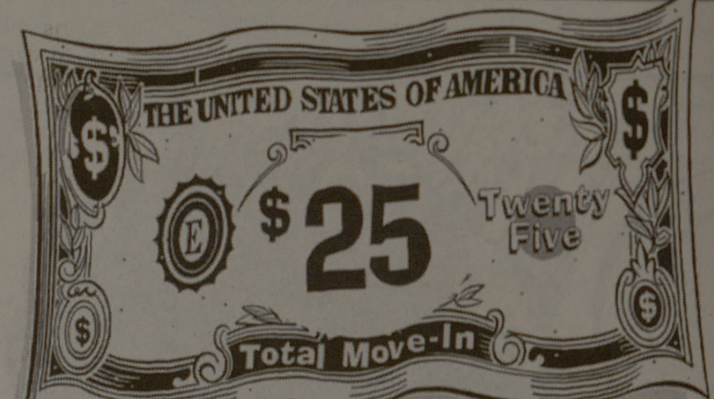
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