

Integration slow in Vidor

VIDOR (AP) — Clarence Russell does not feel comfortable going out at night, leaving home without a hat or speaking in public.

"Sometimes I feel like I am in the camp of the enemy," said Russell, 37. "I have to be careful and go undetected. I'm not an idealist. I'm a black person, and there are certain boundaries I cannot cross."

Russell is one of only eight black people who identified Vidor — population 11,440, including 11,135 whites — as their hometown in the 2000 census.

But that is eight more than 10 years ago in this southeastern Texas city that gained a reputation as a Ku Klux Klan stronghold during a desegregation dispute in the 1990s.

Vidor is a working-class community straddling Interstate 10 about 10 miles outside of Beaumont. It is surrounded by chemical plants and refineries, which employ many of the area's residents.

Vidor became part of a class-action lawsuit filed in the 1980s alleged that blacks in 36 East Texas counties were denied public housing because of their race.

Attempts to integrate Vidor's public housing in the early 1990s failed after the blacks who volunteered to move in fled, saying the racial hatred was unbearable. They complained of racial slurs, Klansmen showing up on their doorsteps, KKK threats to burn down the complex, youths running through the complex wearing sheets and threats of beatings and lynchings.

Klansmen handed out racist literature, toured the housing complex in buses and full KKK regalia, held rallies and raised money to "Keep Vidor White."

Some other East Texas communities ignored the 1993 federal order demanding integration. But it was Vidor that became the focal point of the KKK.

Today, only a few black people have

moved to Vidor, while integration of the housing complex remains under litigation.

Still, many residents say they are eager for the city to shed its image as a hotbed of racial intolerance.

"I think we realized letting people be people and accepting them for who they are was simply the right thing to do," said Mayor Joe Hopkins. "We are certainly trying to make sure everyone knows that anyone who wants to live here is welcome here."

Far southeastern Texas is home to 116,491 black residents, or about 22 percent of the seven-county area's population of 531,951. In Beaumont, blacks and whites each represent 46 percent of the population.

But Vidor is similar to a number of other southeastern Texas towns that are practically all white. Vidor, Lumberton and Mauriceville all had fewer than 10 black residents. Deweyville, with 1,190 people, had none.

News in Brief

Florida boy bitten by shark suffers new complications

PENSACOLA (AP) — An 8-year-old boy whose right arm was torn off by a shark suffered internal bleeding Monday, complicating his recovery, doctors said.

Jesse Arbogast, whose arm was reattached after being bitten off by a 7-foot bull shark July 6, was immediately treated for the lower gastrointestinal bleeding, said Dr. Rob Patterson of Sacred Heart Children's Hospital.

The boy, from Ocean Springs, Miss., remains in critical condition and in a light coma. Doctors say he may not have suffered brain damage as initially feared,

but it will be some time before they are certain.

Murder suspect killed after shotgun attack

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — A man was shot to death after he fired at officers trying to arrest him for the shootings of a 14-year-old girl, authorities said.

Sheriff's deputies Christopher James home in Leicester on Monday and found his sister wounded.

Ingle, 20, fled after a brief standoff in a parking lot, he was shot at one of the officers, Deputy Sheriff Ross Robinson said.

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