

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1999

Sheriff Straw Poll

The Tarrant County GOP's idea is a harmless fund-raiser that need not be taken too seriously.

The most interesting political race in these parts, come 2000, probably won't take place in November but will occur eight months earlier, when the Republican candidate for Tarrant County sheriff is decided in the March primaries.

The quest to unseat Sheriff David Williams has already drawn a slew of hopefuls who have indicated that they intend to run against the controversial incumbent.

Never a group to pass up an opportunity to make money, the Republican Party in Tarrant County has announced that it will host a straw poll Nov. 20 for voters who want to pay \$15 for the privilege of indicating whom they favor as the GOP candidate for the job.

At the rate that Republican candidates

are springing up like mushrooms after a good rain, the party can rake in some bucks if just the wannabes decide to play along. The pay-to-vote balloting will take place in a parking lot at The Ballpark in Arlington a month before candidates actually file for office. By the time the real primary rolls around, there could be fewer names on the official ballot.

Anything — gimmicky or otherwise — that attempts to get the electorate more involved in the democratic process is a good thing in our book, but keep in mind that a straw poll means next to nothing when all is said and done. If straw polls carried any credibility, conservative radio show host Alan Keyes and Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch would be booked with every talking head in America this week after finishing ahead of Gov. George W. Bush in Alabama's GOP presidential straw poll last weekend.

Party sees race for sheriff as best shot

A Democrat hasn't held Tarrant County's top law enforcement job since the early 1980s.

By **MAX B. BAKER**
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

HURST — When Luther Perry drove to the United Auto Workers union hall yesterday in an old Chevy pickup, he had a pocket full of cards and a dream.

"There's Going To Be A New Sheriff In Town," Perry's business card boldly predicts. He's one of three Democrats running for Tarrant County sheriff and was passing out the cards at the UAW's annual Labor Day picnic, which traditionally draws many political candidates.

The picnic was sponsored by the Tarrant County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

"This is our best opportunity to elect a Democratic sheriff," said Perry, an assistant to Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham. "If we miss this opportunity, Lord knows when we'll do it again."

Haltom City police Detective Shane Harrison and Tarrant County Sheriff's Lt. Darrell Clements also worked the crowd yesterday in their bids to be the party's nominee for sheriff.

Though party leaders disagree about whether next year's race for sheriff is a now-or-never proposition for Democrats, they concede that it is the party's best chance to reclaim a Tarrant County office. A Democrat last held the position in the early 1980s.

"It's important to Tarrant County to show a Democrat can win a countywide race," county Democratic Chairman Art Brender said before speaking to about 1,000 people at the UAW 218 Hall in Hurst.

Two-term Republican Sheriff David Williams continually makes headlines as he bangs heads with county commissioners. At least seven candidates are considering running against him in the GOP primary.

"The Republicans are trying desperately to get rid of that guy. The last good sheriff we had was Lon Evans, and he was a Demo-

crat," Brender said.

Republicans scoff at the idea that they might lose the race to a Democrat.

"I think your chances of winning a lottery 10 consecutive times in a row are greater than a Democrat winning a countywide office," said Bryan Eppstein, a primarily Republican political consultant in Fort Worth.

"It's just that bad," he said.

In the spotlight since he took the oath of office, Williams has been painted by members of his own party as incapable of running the Sheriff's Department, which has a budget of about \$60 million.

Williams has battled commissioners over helicopters, cars and department staffing.

Things got so bad in his second term, during which he sued the county commissioners over his

budget and then demanded that they pay for his attorney, that many of Williams' top political backers abandoned him.

Other potential GOP candidates include Fort Worth City Councilman Chuck Silcox; Dee Anderson, the Arlington Police Department spokesman; and Brad Patterson, former president of the Fort Worth Police Officers Association.

Jerry McGlasson, former North Richland Hills police chief; Dave Dunaway, a former top deputy and Texas Ranger; James Cummins, a former deputy; and Jim Hunter, a private investigator, round out the list of potential Republican candidates.

SHERIFF

But winning a Tarrant County office as a Democrat hasn't been easy in recent years.

Since 1988, Republicans have boosted from 24 to 81 the number of GOP county officeholders. County Court Judge Mamie Bush Johnson, the last Democrat to hold countywide office, was defeated last year.

Defections of Democrats to the

Republican Party account for some of that increase in political power: County Judge Tom Vandergriff, Commissioner J.D. Johnson and District Attorney Tim Curry are among those who switched.

But with so many Republicans running, leaders of both parties expect a runoff to determine the nominees for sheriff. If Williams gets into the second round, he may win because of his ties to some party activists such as the Christian right, Brender said.

Perry is considered the Democratic front-runner; with about \$6,700, he is the top fund-raiser. Harrison has pulled in about \$950 and Clements \$600, campaign reports say. The race is expected to cost at least \$150,000.

Anderson and Patterson, the two top GOP fund-raisers, have about \$50,000 each.

Perry, a 24-year veteran with Fort Worth police, said that if Williams "is the Republican nominee, I intend to get into a series of informational debates, and the people will be able to determine who

is the candidate of substance."

Wearing a white cowboy hat and a silver belt buckle, Harrison distributed business cards saying, "Shane for Sheriff," referring to a fictional cowboy and gunfighter who rides in from nowhere to save the day.

Harrison, a former undercover drug officer, also said he's not afraid to run as a Democrat when Gov. George W. Bush might be heading the GOP ticket as the presidential nominee.

"If I was crazy enough to get out there and work undercover and put my life on the line each and every day, then I can handle the race for sheriff," Harrison joked.

Touting his experience as a watch commander in the jail since 1994, Clements said family illnesses have cut back on his politicking the past few months. But now he's back on the campaign trail.

"I hope things settle down and I can get back at it," Clements said. "Because it's going to be tough for any Democrat to have a good strong showing."

County shifting duties to constables

Tarrant commissioners decide sheriff's deputies will stop serving civil court papers.

BY NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — County commissioners decided yesterday that Tarrant County constables and not sheriff's deputies will serve civil court papers.

After a contentious hourlong discussion, the commissioners voted 4-1 to reject a Sheriff's Department plan to add eight new deputies and take over the entire responsibility of serving civil court papers.

Instead, the commissioners cut 14 positions from the Sheriff's Department and gave the eight county constables the responsibility of serving civil court papers, such as those involving child support matters, judgments against property and witness subpoenas.

Sheriff David Williams, who has said he is opposed to shifting the responsibility to the constables, did not attend yesterday's Commissioners Court budget meeting.

Executive Chief Deputy Hank Pope, the highest-ranking sheriff's official in attendance, said Williams was ill yesterday.

At a budget meeting two weeks ago, Williams said the state gives his office authority to deliver the papers.

"These are responsibilities that reside with the sheriff's office," he said.

However, Assistant District Attorney Marvin Collins has said that constables and the Sheriff's Department have the statutory authority to serve the court papers. It is up to the Commissioners Court, he said, to allocate the county's money in the manner it determines is most efficient.

The sheriff's plan presented yesterday called for slashing each constable's staff from about four deputies and a clerk to just one deputy, saving the county \$1.18 million.

But the commissioners, who are still looking for cuts to balance next year's budget, said they could not support the plan because it lacked credibility.

"We need some real information, not just 'Trust me, it's going to work,'" Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said. "The real information is just not there."

Other commissioners said they could not follow the sheriff's officials' arguments in favor of their own plan.

In voting to add three deputies and a clerk to the constables' staff, the commissioners said they expect to save about \$405,000 next year.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, who cast the lone dissenting vote, said he is concerned that there might be a lack of cooperation between the Sheriff's Department and the constables. Every county that has successfully undertaken

such a move has done so with the cooperation of its sheriff, Johnson said.

"I don't want us to get into a civil service papers war," he said. "It could be disastrous to try to make the change this year."

Currently, constables serve about 70 percent of the civil court papers and deputies serve about 30 percent.

"We intend to cooperate no matter what the circumstances are," Pope said. "We presented a program we thought would be valid and save the county money."

Large urban Texas counties serve civil papers in a variety of ways. In Harris County, constables deliver summonses. In Bexar County, the Sheriff's Department serves the papers, and in Dallas the responsibilities are split between constables and sheriff's deputies.

Constable Jim Palmer said shifting the service of civil papers to constables is long overdue.

"We are the specialists in serving these kinds of papers," he said. "If you wish to avoid duplication in government, then constables should serve them."

The transfer of the civil court responsibility, which becomes final when the budget is adopted this month, is the latest move by the commissioners in a monthlong assault on the Sheriff's Department budget — \$56 million this year — that commissioners have said has gotten "out of hand."

Nineteen vacant jailers' posts have been cut, and yesterday two positions from patrol and an administrative position that oversees the sheriff's vehicle fleet were cut.

The vehicle fleet has been decimated in the past month.

Williams has lost his take-home Chevrolet Tahoe, and the 147 county vehicles now assigned to the Sheriff's Department would be cut to 109 vehicles. The number of take-home cars would be slashed from 85 to 18. Sheriff's officials have said the vehicle cuts will adversely affect the department's operation and service.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657

SATURDAY, SEPT. 11, 1999

CHEERS & JEERS

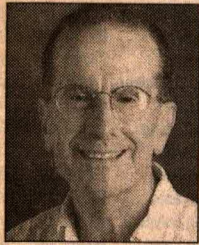


Cheers: To the Sheriff's Department Patrol Division for its fast response to an Aug. 27 hit-and-run accident involving my daughter on Boat Club Road. Cheers to the Eagle Mountain Saginaw EMS paramedics, and most of all to Sue Lewis and Michal Dedwylder, who stayed with Emily until Mom could arrive on the scene. My heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.

SUZANNE GREENE, FORT WORTH

County government needs a good, hard look

The next millennium will be characterized by even more rapid change than the past. However, many of our governmental institutions still remain as they have for decades. Many need drastic renovation.



**ALLAN
SAXE**

County government is an excellent example of an institution that desperately needs overhaul. It was put in place in Texas and throughout much of the United States to serve an agricultural and rural people. In Texas, county government is simply an arm of the state. Its functions are mostly administrative. It has little power to make the laws, only to carry them out.

As such, the county once stood at the center of our political, economic and even social life. Early towns were very small, incapable of providing even basic services outside of their tiny incorporated areas. The counties built most of our roads. Counties maintained our courts, jails, health care and law enforcement. They even provided library services in some places. The county seat, the courthouse, the town square all brought people together.

Today, the county is being eclipsed by the larger urban areas. Cities now reach out to cross county lines. If you ask people — who, like most of us, live in a setting of rapidly growing urban sprawl — where the county seat is, it may be difficult for them to respond correctly.

The larger cities carry most of the load for law enforcement, road construction, and library, sewer and water services. Only in small rural areas does the county still seem to be a necessary political institution.

In the past, county government in Texas as well as in other states was characterized by much internal feuding and bickering, and a blatant spoils system. It is a tribute to our present Tarrant County Commissioners Court and its presiding officer, County Judge Tom Vandergriff, that county government has risen far above these older characteristics.

Vandergriff and the commissioners today present to the public high standards for professionalism and trust. Still, its structure needs to be reassembled for future needs.

What kind of changes are needed? Many county offices filled by election need to be changed to appointed positions.

Why do we need a sheriff who is elected? The election of a sheriff goes back to a much older time. Today, this

office is mostly that of operating a county jail. It is a very important office, but one that can be carried out by someone appointed by the state or the county commissioners.

The police chiefs of every large city in Texas are today appointed by city managers or city councils. They have broad law enforcement responsibilities. If they can be appointed, so can county sheriffs.

Not only is the election of county sheriffs out of the past, but the partisanship of these law enforcement officers makes the position even more of a relic. Why does a sheriff have to be elected as a Democrat or a Republican? Is there any real difference between the two, at least at the local level?

In past years, sheriffs were elected by straight-ticket-voting Democrats. Today, sheriffs are elected (at least in Tarrant County) by straight-ticket Republicans. Sheriffs should be skilled administrators and law enforcers operating in a highly professional manner. Their party affiliation should be of no consequence.

Other elected county positions should also be redone. District and county clerks, constables and tax assessor-collectors all should be considered for the change to appointed positions.

Most of these offices are today held

by men and women of high esteem and professionalism. Still, these offices need to be retooled for future generations of streamlined county government.

To remake county government would require a legislative, constitutional and public debate. It is a chore that would not be easy, but it should be considered. Perhaps some county offices could be abolished altogether, or their functions merged.

Former Tarrant County Judge Howard Green set a wise precedent years ago. He ran for a then-county position called county treasurer. He felt it was an unnecessary, duplicative job. If elected, he promised, he would work for its elimination. He won and fulfilled his promise.

The same was accomplished at the state level a few years back when the office of state treasurer was eliminated and its duties merged with the comptroller's office.

In the upcoming county elections this spring and fall, the structure and function of county government should be open to discussion.

ALLAN SAXE is an associate professor of political science and a longtime resident of Arlington. You can call him at (817) 548-5558 or write to him in care of the *Star-Telegram* at 1111 W. Abram St., Arlington, TX 76013.

FORT WORTH

Civil service board agrees to review sheriff's request

By NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County's three-member Sheriff's Civil Service Commission agreed yesterday to consider changes to its rules recommended by Sheriff David Williams and sought by many of his deputies.

Williams, seeking to improve pay and working conditions for the 1,300-member Sheriff's Department, has been after the commission for two months to make rule changes to promote career development procedures and policies for both sworn and nonsworn employees.

In July he proposed radical changes to the rules, putting personnel decision-making authority in the hands of the commission and its secretary, who would no longer be the county's director of human resources. But he subse-

quently dropped those requested changes, asking instead that the commission adopt rules used in Houston by Harris County.

"There are a lot of good things in the Harris County proposal," Williams told commissioners yesterday.

Commission Chairman Richard DeOtte said that he had received more than 500 letters in support of changing the rules.

"I'm convinced at this point that the civil service rules have to change," he said.

DeOtte said that he has toured the jails and talked with Sheriff's Department employees. They are concerned about pay, promotion, assignments and officer safety, he said.

"Wholesale changes to the rules are a great effort," he said. "I don't know that the entire Harris County rules should be adopt-

ed, but we can do some things."

Administrative adjustments can be made and communication between the commission and Sheriff's Department employees can be improved, DeOtte said. The commission will begin making changes to the rules in the coming months, he said.

"We would prefer a broader approach but we also recognize that there is a lot of material for them to review," Williams said. "By the next meeting they will have been able to thoroughly review the information and make the best possible decision."

The county's civil service rules for law enforcement employees were first adopted in 1992. Before that, Sheriff's Department employees were subject to the civil service rules that apply to all other county employees.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

The power to cut

"The power to tax involves the power to destroy," the quotation says. May I also say that to cut is to destroy?

If the Tarrant County commissioners continue cutting positions from the Sheriff's Department, one's dream of promotion is dashed. A detention officer for life! This constant cutting is a detriment to this law enforcement department.

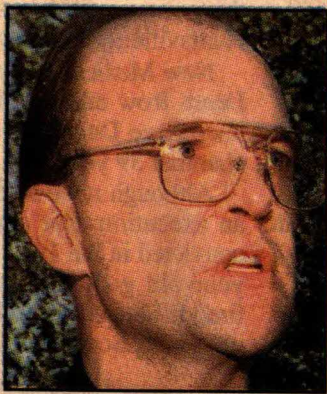
I am certain that the commissioners assume that they are doing what is best. I say you are not. Personal animosities are clouding the good, sound judgment that is needed during budget time.

Whether the commissioners want to realize it or not, according to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department is a law enforcement agency. We in the department want to be treated as such.

We demand comparable pay and the opportunity to advance in this department as high as we can go. Isn't that the American dream? We want double time-and-a-half for working holidays. We want a realistic uniform allowance; 32 bucks a month doesn't cut it.

Most of all, we want respect for doing a darn good job.

Derrian Richardson
Fort Worth



Sheriff David Williams asked commissioners not to cut some vehicles from his department. They decided to transfer 13 Sheriff's Department vehicles to county surplus.

Commissioners adopt budget for 1999-2000

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County commissioners adopted a \$259.5 million budget for the next fiscal year yesterday, while maintaining the tax rate at 26 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

Commissioners also approved a \$245.8 million hospital district budget for the next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. The tax rate also

remains unchanged at 23 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

The votes by County Judge Tom Vandergriff and the four commissioners on the county budget followed a 2½-hour discussion about vehicles and staff members in the Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff David Williams appealed to commissioners yesterday not to cut some vehicles from his department and not to remove others from the

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COUNTY

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take-home list. He also asked to increase clerical staff.

Commissioners allowed Williams' department to keep one vehicle scheduled for elimination as a take-home vehicle. They also transferred 13 vehicles from the Sheriff's Department to county surplus.

Williams said his department would require five new positions to manage open-records requests formerly handled by the district attorney's office. The commissioners eliminated a vacant major's position and designated that salary to fund staff to handle records.

Commissioners also approved an annual contract with the chief medical examiner, Dr. Nizam Peerwani, for \$687,788. Vandergriff and Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay voted against the contract.

VanRavenswaay said it doesn't

allow enough oversight of Peerwani's office and would prefer that Peerwani serve as a county employee.

Under the contract, which was approved 3-2, the county will provide a facility, personnel, equipment, transportation and educational materials for the medical examiner's office.

Peerwani will also be allowed to perform nonjurisdictional autopsies — those autopsies from counties other than Tarrant, Denton or Parker — at the medical examiner's office. But 40 percent of the fees collected from those outside autopsies must be returned to the county as reimbursement for laboratory costs.

The contract prohibits Peerwani from conducting private autopsies in the county facility. He is allowed to use the facility for private lab work, such as toxicology tests, but he must reimburse the county at the same rate charged to other law enforcement agencies, the contract says.

Karen Rouse (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1999

Fort Worth area

Foul play suspected in death of man found in driveway

Tarrant County sheriff's investigators suspect foul play in the death of a 51-year-old car salesman whose body was discovered yesterday by children waiting for a school bus.

The victim, identified as Robert Pounds Sr., was found shortly before 8 a.m. on the dirt driveway of his home in the 5600 block of Tenderfoot Trail, on the northern side of the county, sheriff's Capt. Herb Chambers said.

Chambers said it was believed that Pounds was intentionally run over by someone in a vehicle after an early morning altercation. An arrest was expected soon, Chambers said last night.

Pounds had lived in the neighborhood for years and was well-liked, his sister-in-law, Marda Cox said.

"People around here called him 'Smiley,' because that's what he always did," Cox said as she stood outside the victim's home. "He was just one of those people you had to love."

Chambers said a motive for the altercation and subsequent killing had not been determined.



Pope

Sheriff's top deputy seeks Haltom job

By NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams' top assistant, Executive Chief Deputy Hank Pope, is making a bid to be the next Haltom City police chief.

Pope, 49, a Haltom City native, has been a chief deputy in the Sheriff's Department since Williams took office in January 1993, and the department's chief of staff since 1995.

Pope began his law enforcement job as a Haltom City patrolman in 1977. He worked there as a juvenile officer, sergeant, detective and finally assistant chief. He also developed policies and procedure manuals, and helped the city win community policing grants.

"I put some programs in place that still exist today," Pope said. "I'm a hometown boy. I grew up out there."

In 1987, Pope joined the Arlington Police Department, where he worked on patrol and as a homicide detective.

The Haltom City job became available July 26 when Andy Burt, the city's police chief for six years, resigned. Burt, who joined the department in 1989, left a position that pays about \$75,000 annually. At the time, city officials said Burt was leaving to pursue other opportunities.

City Manager Bill Eisen selected Burt as police chief after the resignation of Tom Cowan, who left to become police chief in Cleburne. The search for a new chief could take four months, Eisen has said.

Assistant Police Chief Roger Macon is acting chief of the 67-officer department while city officials search for Burt's replacement. Macon, 40, who has worked in Haltom City more than 18 years, said he has also applied for the job.

Macon, who joined the Haltom City police force in 1981 and was promoted to sergeant in 1984 and then lieutenant, was named assistant chief in 1993.

About 30 people, including some from out of state, are interested in the job, said Mark Huff, city human resources director. The salary for the new chief could range from \$58,500 to \$93,700, depending on experience, Huff said. The city will stop taking applications at month's end, he said.

Pope said he met with Eisen this month to discuss the job.

"There is still a lot to be talked about," Pope said.

Eisen, out of town until Tuesday, could not be reached to comment.

The Haltom City Police Department has a budget of about \$4.5 million for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. The budget proposes raises for the Police Department in an effort to slow the turnover among officers.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657

the INSIDER report

Watch for a stealth campaign by Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams** in the party's upcoming straw poll on his race.

Former North Richland Hills Police Chief **Jerry McGlasson**, another candidate in the race, says the word out of the courthouse is that Williams' supporters will quietly flood the Nov. 20 event.

That's exactly what McGlasson and candidate **Dave Dunaway** were afraid would happen when the GOP announced plans for the poll a few weeks ago.

Tarrant sheriff's deputy

no-billed

BY NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A Tarrant County grand jury declined to indict a sheriff's deputy yesterday on animal cruelty charges after allegations that he whipped a horse with a rubber hose.

Deputy Ralph Clemons Jr., who was assigned to the sheriff's program that rounds up stray animals, was no-billed by the grand jury after more than an

He was accused of cruelty to the horse he rode in his job rounding up stray animals.

hour's testimony.

"I'm relieved. My faith is restored in the system," said Clemons, a six-year Sheriff's Department employee, as he left the grand jury offices. "I never did any of this. I'll never change my story

because I didn't do it."

Sheriff's officials said yesterday that Clemons, who has been working patrol, will probably get his old job back.

Clemons, 28, who has proclaimed his innocence since his July arrest, was accused of hitting Cody, an adult gray Arabian, on the head and neck with a length of rubber hose. The whipping is alleged to have occurred June 29 in

front of a group of children learning to ride at the Stockyards Station outdoor arena.

He told investigators that he was trying to control his horse after dogs upset it. He denied hitting the horse.

But several witnesses to the mid-morning incident said they saw Clemons hit the horse with a piece of hose. Others told an investigator with the Humane Society of North Texas that Clemons tried to keep water from the horse as punishment, which he also denied.

Clemons faced a fine of up to \$4,000 and/or a year in jail if he had been indicted and found guilty of the charge.

Assistant District Attorney Richard Alpert said the grand jury had to decide if Clemons whipped the horse and if the whipping constituted torture. The state's animal cruelty statute sets livestock apart from domestic pets, he said.

"If it was a dog or cat, just injuring it would be sufficient to bring a cruelty to animals charge," Alpert

said. To indict Clemons, the grand jury would have had to conclude that Clemons had "intentionally and knowingly" tortured the animal, he said.

It is legal to beat livestock in Texas, said Dee Stephens, a Humane Society of North Texas cruelty investigator who looked into the allegations against Clemons.

"It's an old law and it's a problem," she said.

The county leases a stable near the Stockyards Station livery stable to house stray animals it rounds up. One of the people who board horses at the stable filed the original complaint.

The horse, which was examined by a veterinarian after the incident, had lacerations on an eyelid and its face, welts on its neck and a laceration on its leg. Sheriff's officials said they believe the horse may have injured itself banging into a fence.

Clemons, who testified before the grand jury in his own behalf, said he wants to go back to the livestock roundup program.

Herb Chambers, the Sheriff's Department administrative director, said the department will probably reassign Clemons to the livestock program.

Fort Worth area

Demoted official sues sheriff over records withheld

FORT WORTH — A sheriff's lieutenant who has been demoted to the rank of deputy has sued Sheriff David Williams, saying he did not follow the state's open records act.

Deputy Ray Grimes, who has appealed his demotion to the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission, is seeking a Sheriff's Department internal affairs investigation report on himself, and a detention bureau report on the use of chemical agents by jailers against inmates.

The Sheriff's Department forwarded the open records request to the state attorney general's office, citing exemptions it believes allow it to withhold the reports.

Silcox weighing run for sheriff

The 9-year Fort Worth city councilman may join at least six other Republican hopefuls.

BY MAX B. BAKER
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — After nearly nine years on the Fort Worth City Council, Chuck Silcox is seriously considering leaving to enter the Republican primary for Tarrant County Sheriff.

Silcox declined yesterday to reveal his final decision but said he has scheduled a news conference for Wednesday at the Fort Worth Police Officers Association headquarters, where he will "formally announce his intentions."

First elected to the council in 1991, Silcox would forfeit his council seat if he announces for sheriff but would continue to serve until his successor is elected.

Silcox, 55, said he will discuss a poll paid for by the police group showing that local Republican voters, 2-to-1, have a negative impression of how Sheriff David Williams operates his department.

An initial plan to give taxpayers a sheriff's department that is "expertly and efficiently run" will also be presented at the news conference, Silcox said.

"My feelings are that the sheriff has totally mismanaged that office, it is costing Fort Worth and other cities and it's time we have someone in there that can communicate and has management skills," said Silcox, a self-described budget hawk.

Silcox would join at least six other Republicans campaigning to replace

Williams, who is expected to announce his re-election plans tomorrow. Three Democrats say they will seek the sheriff's post.

Although he lacks a law enforcement background, Silcox has met with representatives of area police departments and sheriffs' departments about what it would take to run the \$58.5 million department.

He has also contacted the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards/Education about the qualifications for the office, including those for carrying a firearm.

Since Williams was elected in 1992, the former Haltom City officer has frequently been criticized

for his management of the department. He is paid \$101,400 a year.

A recent poll conducted by Fort Worth political consultant Bryan Eppstein for the police association shows that 51 percent of the county's GOP voters had a negative impression of the department's overall operation, 24 percent had a



Silcox

positive impression, and 25 percent had no opinion.

But when specifically asked about the county jail, 64 percent had a negative impression of how it's run, 23 percent had a favorable impression, and 13 percent had no opinion, the survey showed.

The survey of 500 Republicans who voted in the past three GOP primaries was conducted during the third week of September. The

poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

The other GOP sheriff candidates include Dee Anderson, the Arlington Police Department spokesman; and Brad Patterson, former Fort Worth Police Officers Association president.

Jerry McGlasson, former North Richland Hills police chief; Dave Dunaway, a former top deputy and Texas Ranger; James Cummins, a former deputy; and Jim Hunter, a private investigator, round out the list.

Luther Perry, who is an assistant to Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham, Haltom City police Detective Shane Harrison, and Darrell Clements, a lieutenant with the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, are the Democratic hopefuls.

Max B. Baker, (817) 390-7714
maxbbaker@star-telegram.com

Sheriff wants outside ruling on budget cuts

Opinion sought on authority of Commissioners Court

BY NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Sheriff David Williams wants the state attorney general to block cuts to the Sheriff's Department budget that strip the department of its ability to serve civil court papers and take away 10 percent of its cars.

Williams filed an unsuccessful lawsuit last year to stop implementation of the county budget. This year, he wants the Commissioners Court to send the attorney general his request for an opinion on how much authority commissioners have over a sheriff.

"This request targets many of the differences between the Sheriff's Department and the Commissioners Court," Chief Deputy Larry Hester said.

An attorney general's ruling may help to settle some long-standing budget disputes, he said.

Williams, who is expected to announce his bid for a third term tomorrow, also wants commissioners to postpone the budget cuts until the attorney general issues an opinion.

"I don't think the Commissioners Court would agree to such a delay. We can't delay a budget," County Judge Tom Vandergriff said. "The district attorney seemed to think what we did at budget time was completely within our authority."

In approving a \$58.5 million Sheriff's Department budget, the commissioners took away the department's responsibility for serving civil court papers — such as those involving child support, judgments against property and witness subpoenas — and gave it to the eight county constables, cutting 14 positions from the department's roster.

Commissioners reassigned 15 of 147 sheriff's cars to other county departments

and slashed the number of take-home vehicles from 84 to 58. Top administrators in the department lost take-home cars, and Williams lost his take-home Chevrolet Tahoe, one of two cars assigned to him.

Williams, in a Sept. 29 letter to the commissioners, said the cuts to the warrant section "severely compromises the Sheriff's ability" to perform his "legal obligation" to serve civil papers.

Cutting the vehicle fleet "raises serious legal questions on whether the Commissioners Court has this authority in exercising its budgetary responsibilities," the letter said.

Williams' request to the attorney general asks if commissioners:

- Must "reasonably fund" a sheriff's department in order for the sheriff to carry out his mandated responsibilities.

- Can lawfully require a sheriff to relinquish vehicles or other property needed for law enforcement.

- Can direct a sheriff "as to who, where, when and how he will assign or deploy deputies, jail officers" or other employees.

- Can refuse or impede the purchase of previously budgeted vehicles, or have the authority to determine the minimum

requirements "for equipment and vehicles based on mission demand, officer safety and public safety issues."

"We need to have these questions answered," Hester said.

Assistant District Attorney Marvin Collins has said that constables and the Sheriff's Department both have statutory authority to serve the court papers. It is up to the Commissioners Court, he has said, to allocate the county's money in the manner it decides is most efficient.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657

Williams begins race

Sheriff takes credit for county's crime drop, economy

By MAX B. BAKER
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Taking credit for Tarrant County's booming economy and its dramatic drop in crime, beleaguered Sheriff David Williams yesterday kicked off his bid for a third term.

Undaunted by a growing number of opponents and a poll

showing his support dwindling, Williams said yesterday that his efficient operation of the county jail and his metro fugitive squad had contributed to a safer Tarrant County.

"I did what you elected me to do, and things did change," Williams said to about 25 people gathered at the Tarrant County Republican Party headquarters

yesterday. "Today, we can look back and see that my policy has had the horsepower" to succeed.

Since Williams was elected in 1992, he said his department has locked up 290,491 prisoners. The re-engineered fugitive squad — which once arrested 4,000 people a year — now apprehends about 20,000, he said.

(More on SHERIFF on Page 5B)

The sheriff said those factors contributed to the dramatic drop in local crime rates — Fort Worth's plummeted 57 percent and Arlington's 33 percent from 1991 to 1998 — and helped convince corporations to invest and create new jobs in Tarrant County.

"One result of safer streets and lower crime rates has been the unprecedented growth of the local economy. These are some of the blessings of achieving first things first," Williams said.

Several of his prospective opponents and Fort Worth city officials lambasted Williams' claims, saying he had exaggerated his role in crime fighting and economic prosperity.

"That would make him a national treasure, subject to being kidnapped by foreign powers," joked Brad Patterson, a Fort Worth police officer and a GOP candidate for sheriff. "Read it for what it's worth. A self-inflated ego."

Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham also suggested that Williams was overstating his accomplishments.

"For David Williams to take credit for the reduction in crime is a joke," Windham said. "He doesn't get that credit. He may want to take it, but he's not going to get it."

Efforts by Tarrant County cities to fight crime — and in particular the creation of Fort Worth's crime control district in 1995 — should get the credit for turning around the county's spiraling crime rates, Williams' critics and Fort Worth officials said.

Expected to announce Wednesday whether he will run for sheriff, Fort Worth City Councilman Chuck Silcox scoffed at Williams' claims of being a top-notch crime fighter and effective manager of the department, which has a budget of \$58.5 million.

"The sheriff has had nothing to do with the economy, and the sheriff's role in fighting crime is smaller than the Fort Worth Police Department's and all the other police departments in Tarrant County," Silcox said.

Williams is expected to face a stiff challenge in his quest for a third four-year term. Silcox, Patterson and at least five other candidates are campaigning or considering running against Williams in the Republican primary.

Other GOP candidates include Dee Anderson, the Arlington Police Department spokesman; Jerry McGlasson, former North Richland Hills police chief; Dave Dunaway, a former sheriff's deputy and Texas Ranger; James Cummins, a former deputy; and Jim Hunter, a private investigator.

Democrats who have said they're considering a race for the

\$101,400-a-year job are Luther Perry, an assistant to Windham; Haltom City detective Shane Harrison; and Darrell Clements, a Sheriff's Department lieutenant.

On Williams' latest campaign contribution report, filed in July, the sheriff listed only \$100 in donations, while the leading fund raisers in the race — Anderson and Patterson — each had raised nearly \$50,000.

A recent poll paid for the Fort Worth Police Officers Association indicates that 51 percent of the county's GOP voters have a bad impression of Williams' department, and 64 percent were not impressed with how he runs the jail. The poll questioned 500 Republicans who voted in the past three GOP primaries. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

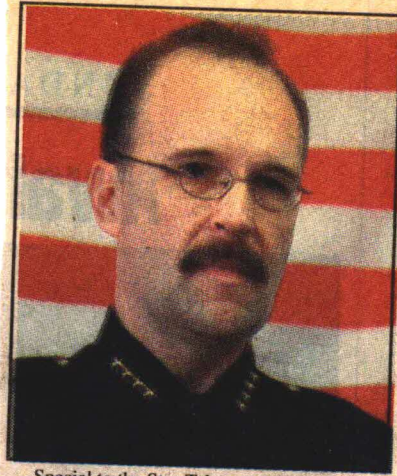
Williams dismissed the poll, saying, "The support will come when we need it."

He told supporters yesterday, "I'm going to need your votes, your support, your financial help, and probably most important, your prayers."

The sheriff has been in the spotlight since his first day in office when he fired three top deputies. Eleven days later, they were rehired.

Since then, he has repeatedly bickered with county commissioners over his acquisition of military surplus helicopters, the purchase of

SHERIFF



Special to the Star-Telegram/JENNIFER LONG
Sheriff David Williams announces his candidacy yesterday.

Chevrolet Tahoes for his department and differences over the department's budget.

He sued the commissioners over control of his budget and then requested that the county pay for his attorney. He later dropped the lawsuit.

Williams continues to battle with commissioners, whom he blames for many of his problems, including his employees' low salaries. He recently asked the state

attorney general for a legal opinion on how much authority the commissioners have over a sheriff.

Williams said that up to 40 percent of his employees could qualify for welfare, as many as 50 percent could get government assistance to buy food and up to 30 percent receive below market-level law enforcement wages.

He said that, since 1998, the department has arrested 246 fugitives wanted on murder charges;

452 accused of rape or sexual assault; and 778 sought in child molestation cases.

"I believe this is shameful and is dead wrong," Williams said, referring to the low pay of his staff. "Most of the city governments grasp the importance of this. Unfortunately, the Tarrant County commissioners don't."

Max B. Baker, (817) 390-7714
maxbbaker@star-telegram.com

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

EDITORIALS

One More Time

A request from the Tarrant County sheriff to the Texas attorney general shows bad timing.

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams was within his rights to file a request last week with the Texas attorney general's office to clarify how much control the county commissioners have over his budget and his department.

But the county budget is approved and ready for the new fiscal year. The sheriff's timing is at best questionable and at worst obstructionist.

It comes as no surprise that the sheriff is unhappy with the budget decisions made by commissioners involving take-home cars, who'll be responsible for serving county legal papers and the number of employees in his department. He had similar problems with last year's budget, and took the foolhardy approach of filing suit against the court to hold up enactment of the entire budget.

He ended up dropping the lawsuit after a judge ordered him to participate in mediation.

Another year has passed, and the sce-

nario that played out was much like the movie *Groundhog Day*, in which the actors live the same day over and over. Williams, once again, was missing in action during the budget process. He once again waited until the budget process was completed before making his move. The only twist in the script was that instead of a lawsuit, he filed a request for an AG's opinion.

Williams could have turned to the attorney general's office at any time during the past year. His questions about how much control the commissioners constitutionally have over his department have not changed in that time.

And who knows? Perhaps everyone will be surprised by what the AG decides. Stranger things have happened — such as Williams taking singular credit for the unprecedented drop in crime enjoyed by Tarrant County during his term. No credit was given during Saturday's campaign announcement to Fort Worth's crime district or the zero-tolerance policies in the city's Police Department. And there was nary a nod to the enforcement efforts of the municipal police who do the lion's share of crime fighting in the county.

Tarrant GOP leader urges Silcox not to run for sheriff

BY KAREN ROUSE
AND MAX B. BAKER
Star-Telegram Staff Writers

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County Republican Chairman Tom Davis injected himself into the GOP campaign for sheriff yesterday, pointedly criticizing Fort Worth City Councilman Chuck Silcox's lack of law enforcement training and suggesting Silcox should stay out of the race.

At the conclusion of a news conference called by Sheriff David Williams, Davis stepped to the microphone and cautioned Republican voters to "be aware of special interests and political maneuvers that are designed to undermine the true law enforcement aspects of this particular office."

"I am encouraging all potential candidates ... who do not have a law enforcement background to look elsewhere for their political promotions," Davis said.

"The one I stress in particular is Chuck Silcox, the city councilman who has made an announcement that he has an intention of running for the seat. I think Mr. Silcox has done a great job as city councilman to a certain degree. The fact that he has no law enforce-

ment background I think is questionable."

Silcox, who has scheduled a news conference today to announce his intentions concerning the race for sheriff, dismissed Davis' comments.

"A county chairman should not get involved between different Republicans in a primary time. That definitely is not his job," Silcox said.

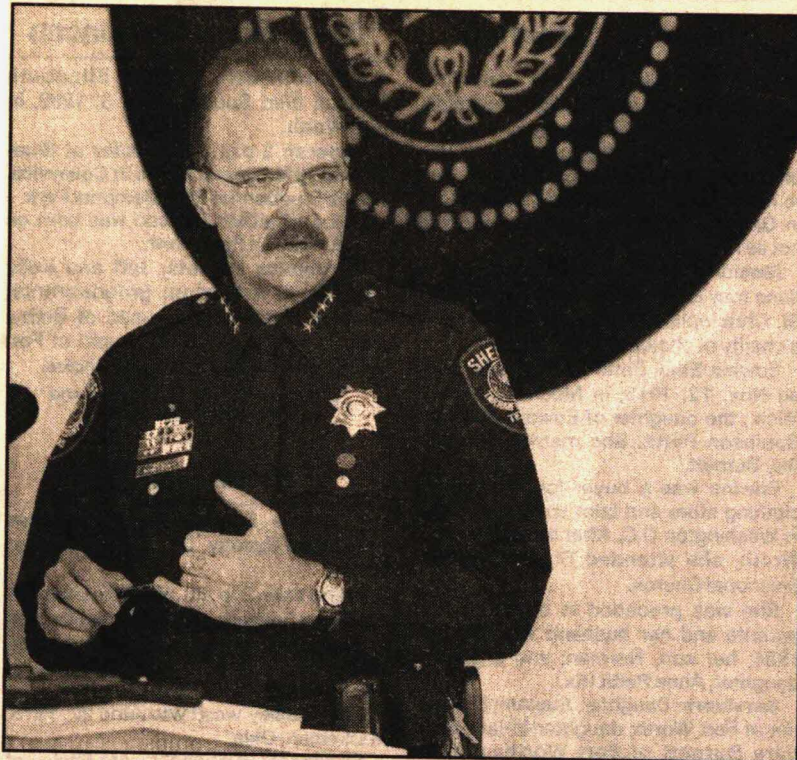
He said Davis "is backing the current sheriff, who is inept."

Davis said he is proud of the field of Republicans who have indicated they will run for sheriff. But, he said, "I'd hate to see the purity of the field messed up, if you will, by candidates who don't have a law enforcement background."

Davis said he particularly objects to Silcox's suggestions that the sheriff's job is primarily an administrative one.

Since August, when Silcox first publicly mentioned the prospect of running for sheriff, he has repeatedly taken potshots at Williams' management style and has said the sheriff's primary responsibility is to run the county jail.

Silcox said he has "never professed to being a peace offi-



Star-Telegram/JEFFERY WASHINGTON

Announcing a new investigations unit for missing and exploited children yesterday is Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams.

cer" and has touted his experience as a businessman and budget watchdog overseeing the city's \$500 million budget.

The sheriff needs to be "somebody who knows how to manage and how to pick the right kind of personnel," Silcox said.

The race has attracted six Republicans and three Democrats.

Williams called the news conference yesterday afternoon to announce the creation of a special investigations unit in the Sheriff's Department for missing and exploited children.

Eight officers in the unit

will operate as a component of the Criminal Investigations Division, he said. Its primary function will be to scrutinize more closely the nearly 1,500 registered sex offenders who live in Tarrant County, Williams said.

The unit will work to prevent crimes against children; ensure that sex offenders comply with state law and registration requirements; and investigate cases involving missing, abused and exploited children.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com
Max B. Baker, (817) 390-7714
maxbbaker@star-telegram.com

Commissioners say they can't seek ruling

Sheriff wants attorney general's opinion

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — If Sheriff David Williams wants an attorney general's opinion on whether county commissioners can slash his budget or strip his department of its ability to serve civil court papers, he'll have to ask the district attorney.

Tarrant County commissioners said yesterday that they aren't authorized to request such an opinion.

Williams, meanwhile, was a day overdue in turning over the 15 vehicles that the commission-

ers transferred out of his department.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius said the vehicles and equipment should have been delivered to the county by the close of business Monday.

Maenius said he sent a letter to Williams on Sept. 28 telling him to return the cars to the county's central garage. A memorandum was hand-carried to Williams on Monday informing him that the issue was on the agenda for yesterday's Commissioners Court meeting, Maenius said.

Williams did not attend the meeting. And at a news conference he called yesterday afternoon to announce the creation of a task force on missing and exploited children, Williams declined to comment on the vehicles.

Last month the commissioners cut 14 positions from the section of the Sheriff's Department that serves civil court papers, re-assigned 15 of the department's 147 cars to other departments, and assigned to county constables the job of serving civil court papers.

In a Sept. 29 letter, Williams asked the commissioners to seek an attorney general's opinion on whether the commissioners must "reasonably fund" the Sheriff's Department, whether they can require a sheriff to relinquish vehicles, whether they can direct a sheriff on employee assignments and whether they can refuse or impede the purchase of vehicles that were previously budgeted.

County Attorney Ray Rike said only the county auditor and the district attorney's offices can request an attorney general's opinion.

Maenius said he will inform Williams in writing that his request for a ruling must be sent to the district attorney, and that he needs to return the county cars as soon as possible.

In a Sept. 30 letter to district, county and family courts, Williams said the Sheriff's

Department will continue to serve civil process papers addressed to the Sheriff's Department.

In other business yesterday, commissioners approved changes to the Tarrant County subdivision and land use regulations affecting subdivisions in unincorporated areas, effective Nov. 1.

Several north Texas builders, including Gary Sheffield, president of the Builders Association of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, said some of the changes may hurt home buyers.

One change requires that home sites in a flood plain must have at least one acre outside the flood plain. Existing regulations allowed properties in a flood plain to be just one acre in all.

Another change requires builders to use hot mix — a mix of asphalt and rock — to build new subdivision streets. Existing regulations allow a two-course surface treatment.

County Engineer Renee Lamb said hot mix is lasts longer and supports heavy loads better.

Sheffield said requiring a homeowner to have more than one acre if his or her property abuts a flood plain could send housing prices well over \$100,000. He also said that the new road regulations could more than double the current cost of materials.

Karen Rouse (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

Rangers turn to DPS, Sheriff's Department

By ANGELIQUE LEE SIY
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department will provide security at The Ballpark in Arlington for the American League Division Series, Rangers officials said yesterday.

The Rangers will play the New York Yankees at home Saturday. A game will also be played Sunday at The Ballpark if neither team has clinched the series.

The agreement, which will pay the off-duty officers \$20 an hour to provide security and traffic control, has upset

members of the Arlington Police Association. Members, who normally provide security, wanted the Rangers to agree to raise wages to \$25 an hour before the postseason.

The Rangers finalized the postseason agreement Friday, said Tim Murphy, the Rangers' assistant vice president for event operations.

"Our fans won't notice one difference," he said. "There shouldn't be any concern about the level of security at The Ballpark."

Regular-season games require 35 to 40 officers. About 50 officers will work each playoff game.

FYI

for your information

Rangers tickets

Rangers officials said yesterday that 1,500 tickets remained for Saturday's game against the New York Yankees, and 6,000 remained for Sunday's Game 4, if one is necessary.

Those who attend Saturday's game will get a rally rag — a white towel with the Rangers' logo, said Chuck Morgan, director of park entertainment for the Rangers.

For more information, call (817) 273-5100 or visit www.texasrangers.com.

STAR-TELEGRAM

Silcox decides against race for sheriff's post



**BUD
KENNEDY**

■
COMMENTARY

Williams' term as top cop in fantasyland to end soon

Somewhat ominously, county Sheriff David Williams warned the other day that he is "a little bit uncertain" what the year 2000 might bring.

He may be uncertain.

Outside the fantasy world of his barricaded office compound, the rest of Tarrant County seems pretty darn certain what 2000 will bring:

A new sheriff.

Five months before primary election day, Williams is losing by 32 points in one recent poll. He reports \$100 in campaign gifts to two chal-

lengers' \$50,000 each.

Yet he not only imagines that he stopped Tarrant County's crime wave and created an economic boom — all as essentially the county's chief jail warden — but he also imagines being re-elected.

Plenty of city officials and law officers have other ideas:

■ A Fort Worth City Council member, owner of a janitorial supply company, considered leaving his city office to run for sheriff — though he is not even a law officer.

■ A recognizable Arlington police officer, the department's TV spokesman, is the No. 1 challenger — admittedly because voters know his name from TV.

■ A veteran Fort Worth officer, formerly president of the police association, is the No. 2 challenger and probably police organizations' sentimental choice.



Star-Telegram/CAROLYN BAUMAN

Chuck Silcox, left, announces his withdrawal from the sheriff's race and his endorsement of Dee Anderson, right.

■ A former suburban police chief with a Ph.D. wants the job, too.

■ So does a retired Texas Ranger and former chief deputy sheriff.

■ Another longtime Fort Worth officer and police community relations spokesman is the top Democratic candidate — destined for instant popularity if Williams wins the Republican primary.

Chuck Silcox, the City Council member, could not have been more blunt yesterday when he called a news conference to endorse Arlington officer Dee Anderson.

Until yesterday, they had never met.

“David Williams has got to be defeated,” Silcox said, explaining why he fooled reporters with the old bait-and-switch ploy.

“This is one way to get the media here and get the information out. ... We all should back off and unite behind Dee Anderson.”

After Anderson offered a few cautious remarks, Silcox took the spotlight again.

“The No. 1 project here,” he said, “is to get the sheriff of this county replaced with somebody else.”

As Silcox’s choice for “somebody else,” Anderson conceded that TV exposure has lifted him to a 49-17 lead over Williams in a recent poll.

“I’m a police officer, not a politician,” he said.

“But law enforcement in Tarrant County is suffering right now. The police chiefs can’t talk to anybody over there [at the jail]. We’re all motivated to get things straightened out.”

Meanwhile, Williams was out somewhere, maybe in that \$29,000 county truck of his. He was supposed to return the truck Monday — he also has a county car — but by late yesterday, he and deputies had yet to return the truck or 14 other missing county cars.

That makes 15 good reasons to elect a new county sheriff.

Bud Kennedy’s column appears
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
(817) 390-7538

budk@star-telegram.com

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1999

By **MAX B. BAKER**
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — After hinting for weeks that he would campaign for Tarrant County sheriff, City Councilman Chuck Silcox bowed out yesterday and endorsed Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson.

The veteran councilman also asked other Republican candidates to rally behind Anderson to defeat beleaguered Sheriff David Williams.

“The No. 1 project here is to get the

sheriff of this county replaced with somebody else,” Silcox said. “And when it came down to it, when I analyzed it, Dee Anderson has a much better possibility of becoming that sheriff.”

Although a poll of Tarrant County Republicans indicated that Silcox, who owns a building maintenance company, would beat Williams, the same survey showed that voters want a sheriff with a law enforcement background.

(More on SILCOX on Page 7B)

Silcox praised Anderson's communication abilities, his budgetary experience and his work on the Amber Plan, a program to alert the public about reports of missing or abducted children.

"Dee Anderson can and will defeat David Williams in the upcoming Republican primary. I will actively assist his campaign and will encourage my fellow Republicans and all my supporters to support Dee Anderson," Silcox said.

Emerging from the background after his name was spoken, Anderson stood quietly near Silcox during the news conference and later thanked him for his support.

"Chuck Silcox is a leader in the city of Fort Worth and Tarrant

County, and to have someone of his stature to stand up and say I should be the new sheriff is a tremendous boost for me and my campaign," Anderson said.

Williams is expected to face a stiff challenge. Others who have indicated they will oppose him in the GOP primary are: Brad Patterson, former president of the Fort Worth Police Officers Association; Jerry McGlasson, former North Richland Hills police chief; Dave Dunaway, a former deputy and Texas Ranger; James Cummins, a former sheriff's deputy; and private investigator Jim Hunter.

On the Democratic side, Luther Perry, an assistant to Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham; Haltom City police Detective Shane Harrison; and Darrell Clements, a lieutenant with the Sheriff's Department, also want the \$101,400-a-year job.

Candidates can't officially file until December. The party pri-

maries will be in March.

Williams, who was elected in 1992 and is seeking a third term, has battled with Tarrant County commissioners over his use of military surplus helicopters, the purchase of Chevrolet Tahoes to replace patrol cars, jail operations, and the Sheriff's Department budget.

Last year he sued the commission over control of the budget and then requested that the county pay for his attorney. He later dropped the lawsuit but continues to battle with the court over his budget and other issues.

Williams could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Silcox's announcement came a day after Tarrant County Republican Chairman Tom Davis encouraged candidates with no law enforcement experience to "look elsewhere for their political promotions."

Silcox conceded that his background is not in law enforcement

but said he was willing to meet the requirements set by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards/Education.

"I want to be sheriff," Silcox said. "But I do not have law enforcement experience nor do I feel right in window dressing this critical requirement for political purposes."

Silcox held his news conference at the headquarters of the Fort Worth Police Officers Association, which helped pay for a recent poll of 500 Republicans who voted in the past three GOP primaries.

The poll showed that in a head-to-head race between Silcox and Williams, Silcox was favored by 32 percent of the respondents, and Williams by 20 percent. In a matchup with Anderson, Williams got only 17 percent to Anderson's 49 percent, the poll showed.

The poll, taken by the Eppstein Group, had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage

points.

Silcox acknowledged that Anderson has strong name identification in the county and said that is valuable.

"We are a political commodity. We are no different than a bicycle. We are no different than anything you will find in the store. Those things that can be marketed, sell. And name identification in this business is one of the most important things to have," Silcox said.

Patterson agreed that the race boils down to "name ID and who can get out the vote" but said Silcox's announcement changes nothing.

"I think everybody is concerned about replacing the sheriff," Patterson said. "I've said that before. Anybody but David. I just hope I'm the guy."

McGlasson questioned Anderson's qualifications, saying he doesn't hold a management position.

"We have from now until

March 14 to know the qualifications of a candidate and not just his name," he said.

Davis said he was pleased that Silcox is out of the race. Davis also denied, as Silcox suggested, that he is supporting Williams' candidacy.

"This was a ploy by political consultants and Chuck Silcox," Davis said. "The concept of doing this degrades the office that he was talking about running for."

He said the public is tired of the negative campaign approach used by Silcox and his consultant, Bryan Eppstein, in orchestrating the endorsement of Anderson.

"People are tired of the political games that are being played. Based on that concept, his endorsement of anybody is only worth what his value as a candidate would have been," Davis said.

Max B. Baker (817) 390-7714
maxbbaker@star-telegram.com

Legal opinion may be sought on deadlock with sheriff

Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County commissioners are considering seeking a state attorney general's opinion on just how far commissioners courts' powers reach.

"I do think that we may want to consider an attorney general's opinion as to what our authority is," County Judge Tom Vandergriff said yesterday. "We need clarification."

Vandergriff said the possibility of a request from commissioners has been prompted by a deadlock with Sheriff David Williams over his refusal to turn over to the county 15 vehicles that commissioners transferred from his department.

The issue is expected to be discussed at Tuesday's regular Commissioners Court meeting, he said.

Last month, commissioners cut 14 positions from the section of the Sheriff's Department that serves civil court papers, reassigned 15 of the department's 147 cars to other departments and assigned to county constables the job of serving civil court papers — duties once performed by sheriff's deputies.

Williams asked commissioners to seek an attorney general's opinion about whether they are authorized to take such actions. Commissioners, however, said he would have to direct his request to the district attorney because they are not authorized to make it.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius said Williams has complied with staff changes. But as of yesterday afternoon, the vehicles had not been returned to the county garage, a supervisor said.

Father of candidate for sheriff dies

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The father of sheriff candidate Luther Perry died suddenly yesterday after arriving in Fort Worth to help open his son's campaign headquarters.

Luther Perry Sr., 72, was found dead about 6 a.m. at his son's home in the 5200 block of Blue Valley Court in east Fort Worth. Family members were told that the cause of death was a heart attack.

The younger Perry, a 24-year veteran Fort Worth police officer and assistant to Chief Thomas Windham, is a Democrat hoping to unseat Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, a Republican.

Perry, 45, said his father was proud of his work in law enforcement and wanted to see him become sheriff. He said he will not delay the formal opening of his campaign headquarters, scheduled from 3 to 7 p.m. today.

Perry kept a prearranged appointment to talk on a local radio station program yesterday, despite his father's death.

"I would have loved for my dad to have seen the outcome of the race," the candidate said. "He would definitely want me to continue on with the same vigor I've had so far."

Williams could not be reached to comment about Perry's loss, but a spokesman, sheriff's Capt. Herb Chambers, said, "I'm sure he's praying for the man."

Other candidates in the sheriff's race said political rivalries should be set aside, if only momentarily, out of respect for Perry and his family.

"I certainly sympathize; I know the feeling of the loss of a parent," said Dave Dunaway, a former Texas Ranger and sheriff's commander who is challenging Williams in the GOP primary.

Republican candidate Dee Anderson, a spokesman for the Arlington Police Department, added: "I'm sorry that what should have been a happy occasion is now saddened. I send my deepest sympathies."

The elder Perry, who lived in St. Louis, arrived Thursday morning in Fort Worth. He had planned to cook barbecue and be by his son's side today during the opening of the campaign headquarters at 5261 Bridge St.

Perry said that he will think often about his father as he campaigns for sheriff and that he is thankful the race brought the elder Perry to Fort Worth to help.

"I'm glad we spent the last moments of his life together," Perry said.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700

jld@star-telegram.com

COMMENTARY

the INSIDER report

Sunday, October 10, 1999

■
Tarrant County Republican Party Chairman **Tom Davis** is not happy with Fort Worth City Councilman **Chuck Silcox** or his consultant, **Bryan Eppstein**.

Davis said that Silcox's bashing of Sheriff **David Williams**, along with his bait-and-switch news conference, is the kind of politics-as-usual that's hard to take. At the event, Silcox opted out of a race for sheriff and endorsed Arlington police officer **Dee Anderson**.

Davis also was uncomfortable because Silcox's announcement was

made at the headquarters of the Fort Worth Police Officers Association, a group that many in the party see as a union and special-interest group.

But Davis was pleased that Anderson has hired Austin political consultant **William Tryon** rather than Eppstein. ■

County denies sheriff new cars

Monday, October 11, 1999

FORT WORTH — Sheriff David Williams has refused since Oct. 1 to hand over 15 of his department's cars, and exasperated county officials are asking what they can do when the county's top cop doesn't follow the law.

The Sheriff's Department won't get new cars to replace old ones until the vehicles cut from the department's budget — including Sheriff David Williams' personal Chevrolet Tahoe — are turned in, Tarrant County commissioners said yesterday.

"What else can we do when we have the top cop in the county violating the law?" Commissioner J.D. Johnson asked.

The options are limited. Commissioners could sue the sheriff, or they could turn to a rarely used procedure and find him in contempt, Assistant District Attorney Marvin Collins said.

Frustrated by Williams' most recent challenges to their authority, the commissioners decided yesterday to have County Judge Tom Vandergriff send Williams a letter ordering him to move the cars to the county garage so they can be reassigned to other county departments.

"Obviously, Sheriff Williams and others are openly defying the will of the court," Vandergriff said.

Williams could not be reached to comment yesterday, and no other high-ranking sheriff's officials attended yesterday's Commissioners Court meeting.

Later, Capt. Herb Chambers, the sheriff's spokesman, said, "I understand no new vehicles will be issued, but some of our cars have outlived their usefulness and need to be turned in."

Nevertheless, the Sheriff's Department intends to hold on to the cars until the attorney general issues a legal opinion on whether commissioners have the authority to strip the department of its ability to serve civil court papers and to take away 10 percent of its cars, Chambers said.

"The law says the sheriff is mandated to serve civil papers," he said.

Williams, who is running for a third term, wanted the commissioners to postpone budget cuts and to ask the attorney general for an opinion concerning their authority. They declined last week to do that.



Sheriff David Williams

Collins said his department hasn't been asked by Williams to request an attorney general's opinion.

"We'll be glad to consider anybody's request that we seek an opinion," Collins said.

Chambers said the department will find the "correct procedure for getting an attorney general's opinion."

In approving a \$58.5 million Sheriff's Department budget, the commissioners took away the department's responsibility for serving civil court papers — such as those involving child support, judgments against property and witness subpoenas — and gave it to the eight county constables, cutting 14 positions from the Sheriff's Department roster.

Commissioners also assigned 15 of 147 Sheriff's Department cars to other county departments

and slashed the number of take-home vehicles from 84 to 58. Top administrators in the department lost take-home cars.

Three of the sheriff's cars were to go to the constables to help them serve the civil court papers, and Williams' Tahoe was to be given to the fire marshal's office.

"The commissioners could find Williams in contempt for not following their order, Collins said.

But the fine for contempt of a commissioners court order is no more than \$25 or 24 hours in jail, he said.

Austin attorney David Brooks, an expert in Texas county law, said he had heard of cases where contempt of a commissioners court was threatened, but had never seen it used.

"The way you enforce a commissioners court order from the county is through an order from another court," he said.

Johnson asked the district attorney to see "if there is anything that can be done, short of filing a lawsuit," to get Williams to comply with the court order. Collins said he will investigate and report back at next week's meeting.

But commissioners said they are reluctant to sue the sheriff. Last year, Williams filed suit against commissioners in an attempt to stop implementation of the county budget. The county spent \$54,000 in its defense.

"Spending taxpayer dollars on a lawsuit against the sheriff is out of the question," Commissioner Glen Whitley said.

The commissioners also questioned whether Hugh Atwell, who has contracted with the Sheriff's Department to have his nonprofit company do chaplain work in the jail, still has an office in a county building, months after commissioners asked him to leave. The commissioners reaffirmed their support for the volunteer chaplain's program in the jail but said they could not allow a private business to use county facilities.

Chambers said neither Atwell, who was jail chaplain for six years before resigning to form the private company, nor any of his employees use a county office, although volunteer chaplains do.

County buildings and offices are under the authority of the commissioners, Brooks said.

"The fact an elected official occupies a building or has a car gives them no claim to that property or office space. The county owns the car, the sheriff's office does not," he said.

The commissioners could conceivably issue an order to a constable to retrieve the cars, he said.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657

Here's the message: "Tarrant County deserves a new sheriff"

If David Williams hadn't heard the message before, he had to hear it last week: Get lost.

The message was delivered by Fort Worth City Councilman Chuck Silcox, a



BILL THOMPSON

Republican activist who couldn't have made it any plainer:

"Tarrant County deserves a new sheriff, and Tarrant County will have a new sheriff elected in the upcoming Republican primary."

Well, the sheriff won't *officially* be elected in the Republican primary; that will have to wait until the general

election in November 2000. But recent electoral history in Tarrant County suggests very strongly that the candidate who wins the Republican nomination for

sheriff will be elected, probably without breaking a sweat.

Which is why conscientious Republicans will become increasingly vocal in opposing Williams' bid for his party's nomination to a third four-year term — and why Silcox called a big deal news conference to announce his endorsement of Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson in the Republican sheriff's race.

Lots of media turned out for the Silcox extravaganza because most of them were under the impression that he intended to announce his own candidacy for sheriff. Party bigwigs and longtime Silcox loyalists had been urging him to run, and he had shown all the symptoms typically exhibited by a politician who is infected with a hankering for higher office.

In the end, Silcox decided that his lack of a law enforcement background was too great an impediment to his candidacy for sheriff. He opted to back

Anderson, who had already launched his bid to displace Williams.

Silcox cited a recent poll that convinced him he could wallop Williams in the primary — but which suggested that Anderson could wallop Williams by an even greater margin.

And since the poll also indicated that voters prefer a sheriff with law enforcement experience, Silcox decided that the sensible thing for him to do was defer to Anderson.

"Dee has outstanding communication abilities — something our current sheriff is sorely lacking," Silcox said. "Dee has budget experience working with the Arlington Police Department. Dee is also an innovator — as he showed with his co-founding of the original Amber Plan, which has proven to be extremely successful in rescuing our children from child abductors."

Silcox urged other would-be sheriffs who plan to challenge Williams for the Republican nomination — there are five

besides Anderson — to quit the race and give Anderson a clear shot at the incumbent.

That's a reasonable request, seeing as how Anderson appears to have much the best chance of defeating Williams. But even clearing the field for Anderson doesn't necessarily guarantee that Tarrant County will rid itself of this sheriff, who is considered an embarrassment even by some of his past supporters.

We need a guarantee, and there's only one way to get it: Williams should drop his bid for re-election and withdraw from the race.

We're talking about a man who has demonstrated no communication skills at all, much less the well-honed skills that Anderson brings to the table.

It isn't clear whether Williams can't communicate or just won't. The fact is, it doesn't really matter; the result is the same either way.

Beyond that problem, consider the following: Williams' consistently bizarre

policy decisions; his preposterous claims of single-handedly reducing crime and revitalizing the local economy; his blockheaded refusal to cooperate with county officials who are responsible for budgetary oversight of his department.

It is obvious that Williams is not even minimally qualified for the office he holds.

Williams should do the honorable thing and retract his announcement that he will seek another term. He should drop out of the race and let voters focus on the extremely important task of choosing a suitable replacement. Not running for re-election might well be the first truly civic-minded act of Williams' tenure as sheriff. It's the least he can do for the people he has served so badly.

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

City and county business

I read in the *Star-Telegram* that Fort Worth City Councilman Chuck Silcox is endorsing Dee Anderson for Tarrant County sheriff in the next election. Why doesn't Silcox take care of Fort Worth city business (including the Police Department) instead of playing cheap political games using his office as a bully pulpit?

I, for one, would like to see more deputies out patrolling to issue citations for the numerous speeders and red-light-runners whom I see every day. (I'm sure that many other county residents, especially those in suburbs with small police departments and in unincorporated areas, would agree.)

Of course, that's hard to do when the county commissioners keep taking away the Sheriff's Department vehicles. Maybe we need to replace the county commissioners and elect people who will work with the sheriff.

Brock Hine
Benbrook

Sheriff will turn over 15 vehicles to county

David Williams sought attorney general's opinion during delay.

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The 15 vehicles that Sheriff David Williams has kept despite an Oct. 4 deadline will be turned over to the county by Monday, a Sheriff's Department spokesman said yesterday.

Williams had planned all along to comply with the Tarrant County commissioners' orders, Capt. Herb Chambers said. But he first wanted to request a state attorney general's opinion on whether the Commissioners Court has the authority to remove cars from his department, Chambers said.

Williams made the request last week, Chambers said.

The sheriff's decision to turn in
(More on SHERIFF on Page 4B)



Sheriff David Williams

the cars reverses his position that the vehicles wouldn't be returned without an attorney general's opinion.

Commissioners notified Williams in writing last week that his request for 11 new cars would not be approved while he kept the 15 vehicles that were slashed during budget talks last month.

Constable Jim Palmer has said the stalemate left his newly hired deputy in limbo. The deputy, who was among several county employees awaiting one of the cars, was given a 1995 Caprice with 161,000 miles because it was the best the

county could offer while he waits for Williams to hand over the vehicles, Palmer said.

Up to four of the cars were designated for constables, another for the fire marshal and three for a new county juvenile probation program, said Debbie Schneider, director of the county's budget office.

In other county developments, commissioners voted unanimously yesterday to send a second letter telling Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy to vacate the Tarrant County Criminal Courts Building.

Williams gave the nonprofit group, created by its executive director, Hugh Atwell, access to the downtown county building when he contracted with it to provide chaplaincy services to inmates.

But only the county commissioners have the authority to allocate

county office space, said County Administrator G.K. Maenius.

Commissioners told the nonprofit group to leave the building in August. But Maenius said the service is "occupying the same office with the same people that [were occupying it] back in August," Maenius said.

Activities that he or other paid members conduct in the county building are strictly ministerial, such as counseling, Atwell said yesterday. Administrative duties such as bookkeeping or correspondence with the Internal Revenue Service are handled off the premises, usually at home, he said.

The organization has four employees and more than 300 volunteers, Atwell said.

Karen Rouse (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

Disputed vehicle wrecked

Car was one sheriff was told to surrender

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A spokesman for Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams veered off a Hood County highway, snapped a telephone pole and crashed into a tree while driving home in a county vehicle he was not authorized to use, officials said yesterday.

Capt. Herb Chambers said yesterday that his reaction to a new blood-pressure medication may have triggered the Tuesday afternoon wreck.

County officials said that Chambers, who was not injured, may be required to take a defensive driving course and could be liable for all damages sustained in the accident.

"He was not authorized to use this vehicle," said Debbie K. Schneider, Tarrant County's budget and risk management director. "Obviously he was using it as a substitute for his personal vehicle."

She said the county will pursue Chambers' personal vehicle insurance to cover the damages. If he had been authorized to drive the 1996 Ford Crown Victoria, she said, the damages would have been covered by the county. A damage estimate was not available yesterday.

The vehicle was one of 15 at the center of tensions between Williams and the Commissioners Court. During budget talks, commissioners slashed the cars from his department and told Williams to turn them over by Oct. 4. The sheriff had refused, saying he wanted to seek a state attorney general's opinion on whether commissioners have the authority to remove the cars from his department.

Vinger said troopers did not believe that alcohol was involved. Chambers said he had taken a new blood pressure medication before the wreck.

"It must have counteracted or something and I must have blacked out," he said. "It must have come on pretty fast. I was

Williams announced this week that the vehicles would be returned Monday, accepting a second deadline set by commissioners.

Chambers, 59, said he had been driving the vehicle home for six months and "was not driving the car illegally."

"We follow orders from the sheriff," he said yesterday. "The sheriff gave us orders to continue to drive all the vehicles [while] an attorney general's opinion was being sought."

Williams, who submitted his request for an attorney general's opinion last week, referred media calls yesterday to his spokesmen.

Officials said the wreck

occurred about 5:30 p.m. along U.S. 377, about a mile west of Cresson.

Chambers was observed "driving very erratically over a period of time," said Tom Vinger, a spokesman with the Texas Department of Public Safety.

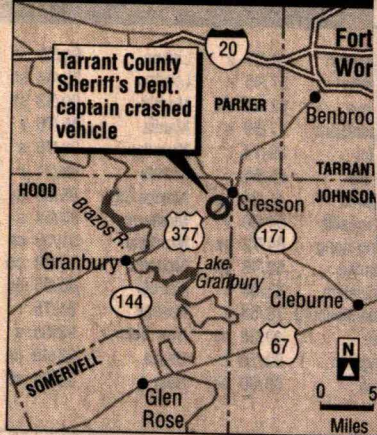
"He basically ended up west-bound in the eastbound lane shoulder, and he went off the road, down an embankment, snapped a telephone pole, hit a barbed wire fence and finally a tree."

Commissioners told the sheriff last week that his request for 11 new patrol cars would not be considered unless the vehicles were turned in.

Nine vehicles, including the wrecked car and a Chevy Tahoe that had been assigned to Williams, had been turned in at the central garage by closing time yesterday afternoon, officials said.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

County vehicle wrecked



Star-Telegram/FRANK PONTARI

not totally cognizant of what I was doing and I went off the road.

"No one was hurt. No one was hit. The doctor said we're not going to use that medicine [again]," he said.

Chambers was back on the job Wednesday morning.

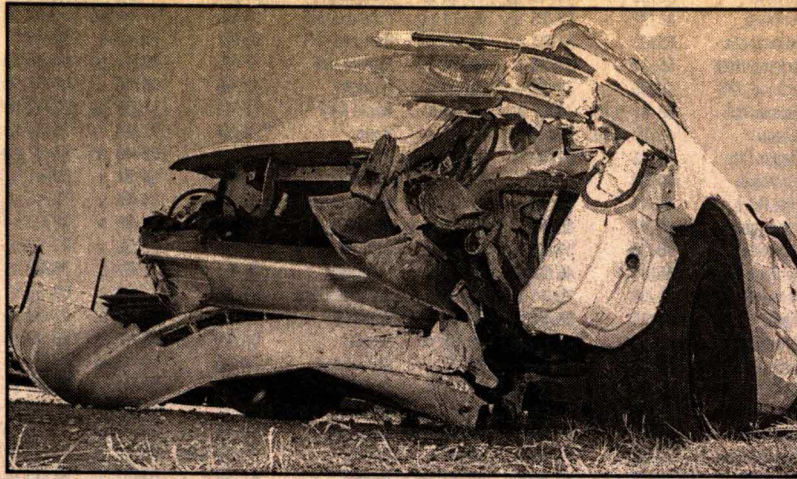
The accident "was no big deal," he said.

Chambers will not face any penalties within the Sheriff's Department for being involved in the accident, said Larry Hester, assistant chief deputy.

"In this case it appears to be a medical reaction and we don't assess that as fault," he said. "It wasn't a vehicle driving out of control. ... The medication put the operator out of control."

The white car with 48,000 miles sits at the county's central garage on Premiere Street with a mangled front end, a shattered right front window and a large dent on the right side.

"It's got pretty extensive damage," garage supervisor Glen Shaw said yesterday. A staff memo issued to county officials yesterday said "the vehicle suffered substantial damage and appears to be a total loss."



Star-Telegram/DALE BLACKWELL

This wrecked car, now at the Tarrant County garage, was among the vehicles commissioners had instructed Sheriff David Williams to surrender.

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1999

Leave sheriff alone

I wholeheartedly agree with Steve Rousseau's Oct. 18 letter about the Tarrant County commissioners' needing to leave our honorable and twice-elected Republican sheriff alone.

Sheriff David Williams will be elected to his third term soon, and I agree with this concerned taxpayer that enough is enough from the commissioners. They need to look at their own \$93,500-plus-perks salaries and the cost overruns of their pet taxpayer-funded projects (like the subcourthouse being constructed in southeast Tarrant County) as places to cut expenses, rather than taking the top law enforcement officer's Tahoe away because he runs a faith-based jail chaplaincy program.

Who said that one should remove the beam from one's own eye so as to see clearly to remove the speck from a brother's eye?

Doyle Jones
Arlington

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

Friday, October 22, 1999 5B

Tend to road business

Enough is enough. Now our Tarrant County commissioners want to take our sheriff's Tahoe away from him.

Do they not have anything better to do than to sit in their offices all day, taking potshots at our elected sheriff? They need to take care of the business we elected them to do: taking care of the county roads.

If you want to see some fine examples of our commissioners' work, take a drive around the Saginaw area. Just be sure that no one in the car has an open container, or the drink will be all over them and your car.

This squabbling is like Dallas County politics. Let's keep it east of the Trinity River.

Steve Rousseau
Saginaw

Tarrant sheriff turns in last of 15 cars as ordered to county garage

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said he expects new vehicles to be ordered today.

BY NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The last of 15 cars that county commissioners cut from the Sheriff's Department were turned in to the county garage yesterday, opening the way for commissioners to buy the department 11 new vehicles.

Among the vehicles turned in was

a Chevrolet Tahoe driven by Sheriff David Williams. A Ford Crown Victoria totaled last week when sheriff's spokesman Capt. Herb Chambers hit a telephone pole on the way home from work was already at the garage.

The commissioners told Williams to turn the cars and some radios in to the garage by Oct. 4 but he refused,

saying he wanted a state attorney general's opinion on the extent of the commissioners' authority to remove cars from his department and reassign them to other county employees.

He was given a second deadline of 2 p.m. yesterday and was told that the Commissioners Court would not buy any new cars for his department

until the old cars were relinquished.

"Everything that was required has been done and hopefully this will make things better," Chambers said yesterday.

Williams has swapped cars with Capt. John Dalton. He is driving Dalton's Tahoe, and Dalton is driving William's old Chevrolet sedan.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said

he expects the Commissioners Court to order the new vehicles for the department today.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657



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To search the Metroplex, go to
www.dfw.com

OBITUARIES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1999

Wilfredo Brito-Rodriguez



AZLE — Wilfredo Brito-Rodriguez, 55, a law enforcement jailer, died Monday, Oct. 25, 1999, in Azle.

Funeral: 3:30 p.m. Thursday at Greenwood Funeral Home. **Burial:** Greenwood Memorial Park.

Wilfredo Brito-Rodriguez was born Oct. 28, 1943, in Manati, Puerto Rico.

He retired from the Air Force in 1983, and in 1985, started working for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department and the Haltom City Police Department in 1997.

Survivors: Wife, Nga Brito-Rodriguez; children, Carmen, Catherine and Michael Brito-Rodriguez, all of Azle; sisters, Carmen and Lydia Brito-Rodriguez, both of Puerto Rico; and mother-in-law, Muoi Thi Nguyen of Azle.

Greenwood Funeral Home
3100 White Settlement Road, 336-0584

Sheriff's latest move irks commissioners

By KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Frustrated county commissioners criticized Sheriff David Williams yesterday for cutting two positions out of his department's confinement division to staff a special task force he created without their involvement.

The two positions — a lieutenant's slot that had been vacated by former jail chaplain Hugh Atwell in June, and a jailer — are now part of the 10-member Special Investigations Unit for Missing and Exploited Children.

Williams, who did not attend yesterday's Commissioners Court meeting, announced the creation of the task force Oct. 5, just five days after the Commissioners Court approved Tarrant County's annual budget.

But the commissioners said they learned of the unit, which has been operating since Oct. 15, only after Williams' announcement.

The commissioners questioned why Williams kept his plans secret last month as the two sides wrangled over his budget.

"What we're saying is we need to know how we allocate the resources that belong to the taxpayers," said Pct. 2 Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay. But that request for better communication is "being ignored," she said.

"If it's that important of a program, can't he come over here and speak to us?" asked Glen Whitley, commissioner for Pct. 3.

Pct. 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson questioned whether the changes would create a staff shortage that will ultimately saddle taxpayers with overtime costs. And he chastised the Sheriff's Department for not providing the court with a breakdown of positions in the department, despite repeated requests.

"We're not trying to run the Sheriff's Department. We're trying to finance it," he said. "But it's difficult to finance when you don't know what the organization looks like."

Lt. David Barrington was a detective in the Criminal Investigations Division until Williams named him the lieutenant in charge of the task force. The transferred jailer will now work in the unit to update sex offender registration information and build an Internet site for the public to access, Barrington said.

The eight other members of the task force were already working in the department's Criminal Investi-

gations Division, Barrington said.

Commissioners learned of the staff changes at yesterday's meeting, when sheriff's Capt. John Dalton and Barrington submitted telephone line requests to accommodate the operation.

The commissioners unanimously approved the request for new and transferred phone lines, but said they were fed up with the ongoing lack of communication.

Barrington said that the positions are used as a budgeting tool and that the loss of a jailer won't be a disruption.

"We have, at any given time, a number of vacancies for jailers," he said. "This one slot is not going to create a crisis."

Dalton said Williams is on vacation.



Find out what's happening around town, go to www.star-telegram.com/metroplex

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1999

Bad dosage

Well, now it appears that Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams' head honcho wrecked a county vehicle that he was not legally authorized to use, claiming that blood pressure medicine caused him to not to be fully cognizant of his actions.

Hmmm. If that be the case, it appears that Capt. Herb Chambers and the sheriff are on the same prescription. Tsk-tsk. I am surprised that they didn't try to place liability on stress inflicted by the county commissioners. One can well imagine the discipline had it been an ordinary jailer or deputy in such a situation.

I feel positive that, by election time, the residents of Tarrant County will suddenly wake up to the irresponsibility of this sheriff. Otherwise, the majority of our voters must be on the same medication.

Floyd F. Clark
Fort Worth

Sheriff's foes question forum

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1999

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Several Republican candidates who are trying to unseat Sheriff David Williams said they think he was given advance notice of audience questions yesterday at a political forum, including one that raised eyebrows.

In response to a written question, Williams said tragedy might have been avoided during the 1993 Branch David-

Williams seemed to have edge, they say

an siege if his counterpart in McLennan County had been in charge, rather than federal agents.

"The situation in Waco could have easily been addressed with the sheriff in Waco. ... But he was not asked."

Williams told members of the Republican Women of East Tarrant County.

Four federal officers and six religious sect members were shot to death Feb. 28, 1993, when agents with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms clashed with Davidians at their Mount Carmel compound near Waco.

A standoff ended 51 days later, on April 19, 1993, when FBI agents —

some in tanks — stormed the compound, which was destroyed by fire. The bodies of about 80 sect members were found in and around the ruins.

The siege has often been seen as a cause celebre for groups that believe that "big government" is intrusive and, at times, dangerous.

Other sheriff candidates at yesterday's Republican forum said they were surprised by the question, which asked in part: "Do you believe the sheriff has a duty to potentially serve as a check and balance against countywide threats of unreasonable civil or military intrusion upon the citizens of the county?"

Former Texas Ranger Dave Dunaway said he answered in the affirmative because he thought the question referred to unlawful militia groups.

Jerry McGlasson, a former North Richland Hills police chief, and Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson simply responded by saying that all levels of law enforcement — local, state and federal — must work closely together.

Williams, in an interview after the forum, said that "everybody else was dancing around" the question.

"I was trying to answer as honestly as possible," he said.

Williams declined to directly

criticize the ATF and FBI's involvement in the Branch Davidian standoff. "That was such a tragedy on such a large scale. ... I don't think it would be appropriate for me to editorialize any further on it," he said.

McGlasson, Dunaway and Anderson said they believe that Williams knew in advance some of the other questions asked at the forum because he answered them while reading from what appeared to be notes.

"I feel like this [forum] was orchestrated ... for the sheriff, and possibly with his involvement," Dunaway said.

"It certainly appeared that he had an advantage," Anderson said.

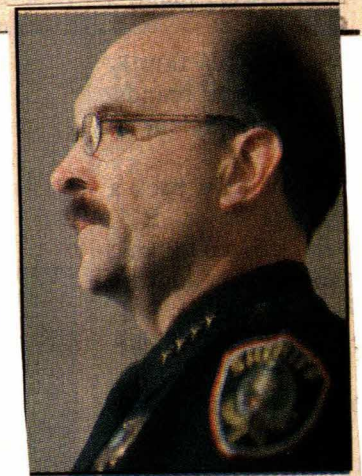
Donna LaFon, president of the Republican women's group, disagreed. She said that the meeting was kept on a "very straight level" for all candidates, and that to her knowledge, no one knew the questions ahead of time.

Williams would not say whether he had been prepped in advance. He said only that he believes his experience in running the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department has given him a clear edge in debating his challengers.

"I've had seven years to prepare. ... I know this stuff," Williams said.

Asked whether he felt outnumbered at yesterday's event, the sheriff laughed and said, "I've always been outnumbered."

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com



Star-Telegram/RON T. ENNIS

Sheriff David Williams appears yesterday in a candidate forum sponsored by the Republican Women of East Tarrant County. Williams wouldn't say whether he had been prepared in advance.

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1999

C'mon, grow up

Maybe I have it all wrong, but I thought the sheriff of Tarrant County was elected to run his department for the betterment of the county residents. I voted for him while living in Tarrant County and would do so again if I still lived there.

I would not vote for any of the county commissioners who continue to whine — through the press, TV and radio — because the sheriff doesn't come to them with every one of his decisions. These grown-ups act like a bunch of children. Further, they have other schoolyard bullies on their side at the *Star-Telegram*.

Sure, I agree that there could be better communication from the sheriff with the commissioners at times, but it really isn't that necessary. In fact, I would be reluctant to talk to people who act like children

Last two helicopters in sheriff's fleet being sent to El Paso

The commissioners' decision closes the book on the program in which two people died.

By KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The remaining two helicopters from a Tarrant County Sheriff's Department program that was grounded after two deputies were killed in a 1997 crash will be given to El Paso.

Yesterday's unanimous vote by the Tarrant County commissioners to transfer the idle aircraft — a Bell

OH-58 and a Hughes OH-6 — essentially closes the book on Sheriff David Williams' 5-year-old helicopter program.

Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester said federal regulations forbid the county from selling the helicopters, which were donated to the Sheriff's Department in 1994. But the department will collect \$45,000 from El Paso as compensation for more than \$60,000 worth of equipment it installed on the aircraft, he said.

That includes electronic equipment, decals, antennas and tools associated with the helicopters. The \$45,000 will be added to the sheriff's crime forfeiture fund for law enforcement programs, Hester said.

Williams was on vacation and

not available to comment, Hester said.

El Paso Assistant Police Chief George DeAngelis lauded the vote. "We have full confidence in the helicopter," he said, referring to the Bell chopper. "It's well-kept and we really think we got a heck of a deal."

He said the aircraft will support

AIRCRAFT

From Page 1B

patrol operations in the El Paso Police Department, which has been using helicopters since 1988. The department already has three helicopters and one Cessna.

Hester said he expects the helicopters, which have been in a hangar at Fort Worth Meacham Airport, to be in El Paso within two months, pending approval from its city council next week.

Williams' department obtained the helicopters through a federal military surplus program. In 1995,

Williams traded two OH-6 helicopters to a California agency in exchange for two Bell OH-58s, Hester said.

One was involved in the Sept. 17, 1997, crash, east of Eagle Mountain Lake, that killed Lt. George Maurice Hendrix and Deputy Thomas Jay Smith. A federal air safety report concluded that pilot error caused the crash.

Tarrant County commissioners grounded the aircraft Sept. 29, 1998, citing safety concerns. The commissioners said they didn't want helicopter operations to be a part of the county structure, and suggested that the department contract with the Fort Worth

Police Department for helicopter support.

Kathy Smith, T.J. Smith's widow, has sued Williams and his department, saying her husband's death was due to gross negligence.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson questioned what equipment would be transferred. He said the helicopter program cost taxpayers in workers compensation claims and the pending lawsuit and he "just wanted to make sure we were transporting all of the helicopter parts to El Paso."

"I'm glad to see the helicopters going to use somewhere," he said.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

Spoiling it all

I just wanted to say a great big "jeer" to the lowlife (or lowlives) who threatened the final home game of Boswell High School with violence.

This was supposed to be a very important occasion for the senior band and drill team members, football players, trainers and cheerleaders because they were to be escorted onto the field by their parents and recognized.

But as a result of the threat(s), everyone entering the stadium had to be searched and scanned with a metal detector by members of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department. Half of the band members didn't show up because of the fear of violence, and the normally packed bleachers were half-empty.

My grandson is a senior honor student in the band, and this entire school year should have been very special for him as well as all the other seniors. However, the last home game of the season was ruined for them because of the threat of violence. At least the football team capped off the last home game with a win against Mineral Wells, but the tension at the game could have been cut with a knife.

To whoever made the threat(s): Get a life!

Carolyn J. Davis
Weatherford

Johnny Randel Snow

MINERAL WELLS — Johnny Randel Snow, 50, a deputy sherriff for Tarrant County, died Saturday, Nov. 6, 1999, at a Weatherford hospital.

Funeral: 10 a.m. Monday at Baum-Carlock-Bumgardner Funeral Home in Mineral Wells. Burial: Sturdivant Cemetery in Palo Pinto County.

Johnny Snow was born Feb. 24, 1949, in Fort Worth.

He was a member of the Church of Christ.

Survivors: Wife, Penny Snow; sons, Gregory Snow, Bradley Snow; parents, Earl and Jennie Snow; brothers, Tommy Snow and his wife, Jan; sister, Betty Blakley and her husband, Roy; father and mother-in-law, Shorty and Peggy Holland; sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Marilyn and Butch Nimmo; sister-in-law, Jeanie Gilly; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Baum-Carlock-Bumgardner
Mineral Wells, (940) 325-4422

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1999

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

From a study of sheriffs

Let me state up front that I am a political independent with no ties to either the incumbent Tarrant County sheriff or to any of his potential challengers.

As a college professor of political science for 35 years, I have had a special interest in Texas local government, especially county government. Therefore, I have read about and closely studied a number of Texas county sheriffs.

I've observed quite a variety. A few were brilliantly competent. Several were corrupt. Several others were stupid, and a couple were well-intentioned but inept.

David Williams almost defies description. I do not think he is corrupt. Neither is he brilliant or stupid. After considerable thought, the descriptive words that seem best to fit are: *arrogant, obstinate, sanctimonious* and *petulant*.

The members of our commissioners court, especially County Judge Tom Vandergriff, deserve an award for their patience, long-suffering and forbearance. And Williams must go.

What this county needs in a sheriff is solid law enforcement experience combined with demonstrated administrative ability, communications talent and a cooperative spirit. Surely we can find such a person hereabouts.

Lawrence Bell
Hurst

County considers leasing idle Cold Springs jail

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — County officials are hoping to generate revenue by leasing the idle Cold Springs jail facility to a private jail operator.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius got the go-ahead yesterday from the Tarrant County Commissioners Court to prepare for proposals from vendors interested in operating the closed 384-bed unit just north of downtown.

The Sheriff's Department oversees the county's three operating jails — the Tarrant County Corrections Center, the old Belknap jail and the Green Bay facility — which house about 3,500 inmates.

Cold Springs, a converted elementary school that opened as a county jail in 1988, closed in 1995 after the county's inmate population fell.

Maenius said two "nationally recognized organizations" with a presence in Texas have inquired about leasing Cold Springs. He declined to name them.

The facility would most likely house medium-risk federal inmates,

such as those detained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for short periods, he said.

Maenius said he doesn't know how much revenue Tarrant County could receive from a lease, but speculated that it could range from \$500,000 to \$1 million annually based on smaller counties' experience.

Texas counties that lease jail space include McCulloch, Limestone and Ector. Maenius said such an agreement would be the first of its kind for Tarrant County.

Commissioner Dionne Bagsby urged Maenius to consider the safety of the mostly elderly population living around the jail when designing proposal guidelines.

When the jail opened in 1988, commissioners assured residents that the county would be a good neighbor, Bagsby said.

"There were promises made to those people that we would be responsible, good stewards ... that they weren't going to be packed in with large numbers of criminals," she said.

Mother of man who died in custody sues Tarrant County

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1999

BY REBECA RODRIGUEZ
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The mother of a man who died while in the custody of Tarrant County sheriff's officers has sued the county, contending that his civil rights were violated in the hours leading up to his death, Fort Worth attorney Richard Haskell said.

James Arthur Livingston, 30, died July 7 at John Peter Smith Hospital. He had been strapped into a Sheriff's Department restraint chair for more than four hours and was

sprayed with pepper spray before his death, according to department records.

Maxine Jackson, Livingston's mother, filed the suit through her attorneys in U.S. District Court on Friday, which would have been Livingston's 31st birthday.

"I just need some closure and some justice," Jackson said yesterday at her attorneys' office.

Marvin Collins, head of the civil division in the Tarrant County district attorney's office, said lawyers for the county received the suit Monday, but he had little comment on it.

"We're in the process of reviewing it," he said. "We have tried to cooperate with all the agencies that have investigated Mr. Livingston's death," as well as with attorneys for his family, Collins said.

Livingston was arrested July 6 on an Arlington warrant for criminal trespassing and was booked into the jail. According to sheriff's deputies, Livingston, who was schizophrenic, became combative. He was strapped into a chair that limited movement of his arms and legs. Early the next morning,

he was found slumped in the chair and taken to JPS, where he was pronounced dead.

The suit contends that sheriff's jailers violated Livingston's civil rights by using excessive force and imposing cruel and unusual punishment. The suit also says that the county has a duty to implement procedures that prevent the use of excessive force and to supervise employees so that they do not exceed the limits of their authority.

Haskell contends that sheriff's employees erred by not decontaminating Livingston

after spraying him with pepper spray, by keeping him in the chair after spraying him, by not notifying the night watch commander of the situation and by not videotaping the incident as required.

The Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office ruled in August that Livingston's was a natural death caused by bronchopneumonia.

Staff writer Linda P. Campbell contributed to this report.

Rebeca Rodriguez, (817) 390-7754
rrodriguez@star-telegram.com

Democrats view sheriff's office as passage to political comeback

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — They met in a union hall, outside the gates of the Lockheed Martin plant, and talked about a political comeback as airplane engines roared in nearby hangars.

One man rose from his metal chair, steadying himself as if he were about to make a confession, and proudly declared: "I'm a yellow-dog Democrat."

No one booed. They were all Democrats at this informal gathering in Machinists Lodge 776.

Despite repeated losses in high-profile races over recent years, local Democrats say they are optimistic about the Year 2000 elections. They say they have a plan.

It is anchored, says Emily Amps, deputy director of the Tarrant County Democratic Party, on a strong push to win the sheriff's race.

Amps said the party believes that it can capitalize on well-publicized controversies involving Republican Sheriff David Williams throughout his two terms in office. Those issues have included his

(More on DEMOCRATS on Page 10B)

disputes with members of the Commissioners Court over budgetary matters and the department's fleet of take-home patrol vehicles, as well as the perception that he does not work closely with other branches of county government.

"We basically believe that David Williams has turned his back on the taxpayers of Tarrant County and has abused his office," Amps said. But, she said, "the current Republican Party in Tarrant County seems to support him and all of his fallacies, which are numerous."

Williams, who was on vacation this week, did not return phone calls to his office and his home. Capt. Herb Chambers, a Sheriff's Department spokesman, said Williams has worked hard to "professionalize" the department. Chambers dismissed Amps' comments as political rhetoric aimed at an incumbent.

"What else would we expect them to say?", Chambers said.

County Republican Chairman Tom Davis said it is a "pipe dream" for Democrats to believe that they can win back the sheriff's office by making Williams' problems — primarily with other Republican officeholders — a campaign issue.

Davis said he also disagreed with some members in his party who believe that Williams has become a political outcast. "I think he is as much a representative of a cross section of the Republican Party as any other countywide elected official ... who is a Republican," Davis said.

Williams' challenge for a third term, however, does not come just from the Democratic Party, where three candidates have filed their intent to run for sheriff.

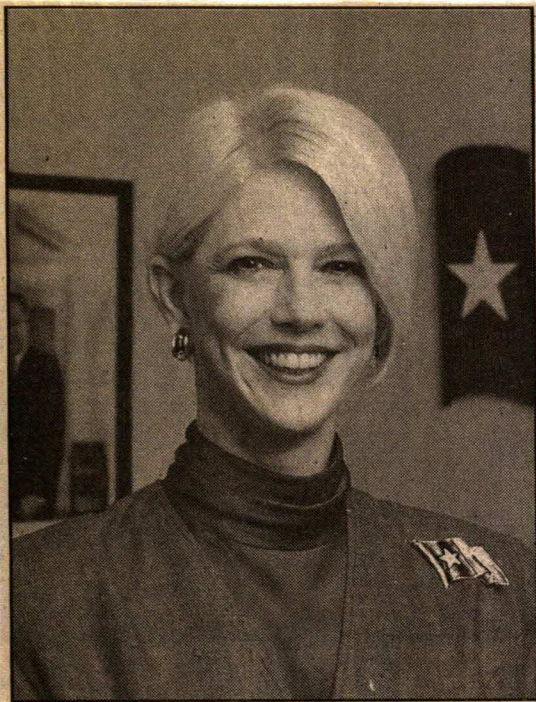
He also has four Republican opponents in the March primary. Williams will seek re-election without some of the support he had during his first two campaigns.

Once a strong supporter, Pct. 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson now says he hopes Williams does not win re-election. "I'm not going to support David Williams. Period," Johnson said. Asked whether he believes that Williams has hurt the local GOP, Johnson said, "He certainly hasn't helped it any."

Johnson, a former Democrat, declined to say whether he will vote for a candidate in his old party if Williams wins the Republican primary.

In addition to the sheriff's race, Amps said, Democrats are encouraged about their chances of upsetting a Republican in a constable's race

DEMOCRATS



The Associated Press/HARRY CABLUCK

Texas Democrats must shed the image as tax-and-spend liberals, Molly Beth Malcolm, the party's state chairman, says. She is shown in her Austin office last month.

and in the race for county tax assessor-collector.

June Garrison, 73, the tax assessor-collector for 15 years, said she was "not really sure" whether she will seek re-election.

Republicans hold every countywide office in Tarrant County, including the 40 district courts and the seven places on the 2nd Court of Appeals.

For next year's elections, Amps said: "Our goal is to fill as many of the places on the ballot as possible. We have many good Democrats willing to run for office. ... At this point, we are definitely testing the water on who would like to run, and for what office."

Local residents who have traditionally voted Democratic say they are eager to regain many of the seats Republicans recently won.

Vernon and Nina Wood of Watauga said they will vote Democratic, despite their misgivings about President Clinton's behavior with a White House intern.

"I think the Democrats are for the poor people and the Republicans are for the rich," Vernon Wood, 75, said as he and his wife prepared to shop for their grandchildren at a Target store in Hurst.

But down the road, on the 11th fairway at Rolling Hills Country Club in Arlington, retired American Airlines executive Ralph Gilmore said he is firmly in the GOP's corner as a "die-hard conservative."

"I just don't like the liberalism of the Democratic Party," said Gilmore, 65, who moved to Tarrant County from Philadelphia 25 years ago.

It is exactly that image as tax-and-spend liberals that Texas Democrats must shed, Molly Beth Malcolm, the party's state chairman, said at a workshop last month in west Fort Worth.

Malcolm encouraged the nearly 80 party loyalist to bill themselves as fiscal conservatives working hard on issues important to Texans, including patients' rights and better benefits for teachers.

Everyone at the session acknowledged, however, that they do not have the financial resources that Republicans command.

And that could be a problem for Democrats, said Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at Texas Christian University. "Money is the mother's milk of politics," he said.

Amps, of the local Democratic Party, acknowledged that the expense of campaigning against a Republican incumbent may discourage some in her party from running for office.

She conceded that no Democrat has decided whether to enter any of the 15 judicial races on the ballot for next year, suggesting a repeat of the 1998 elections when 29 judicial races attracted only four Democratic candidates, including one incumbent, all of whom lost.

"I think our candidates, or potential candidates [for a judicial bench], are considering whether they want to put their lives on hold and spend the money to run," Amps said.

Once the dominant party in the state, Texas Democrats have lost their long-held presence in the U.S. Senate; they no longer occupy the state attorney general's office, and their dominance throughout Tarrant County has been replaced by white-collar Republicans, many of whom moved here from other parts of the country.

"I think the Democrats have a real public relations problem," Riddlesperger said. "They've gotten a reputation in Texas as being the losing party."

To regain some of their strength, Riddlesperger said, Democrats must promote their Texas tradition of prominence and focus on the people most likely to vote for them: women, labor groups and minorities. They must also recruit "attractive" candidates with name recognition and a "winning personality," he said.

Inside Machinists Lodge 776 last month, the Democratic faithful said they sensed a revival.

"If you want to live like a Republican, you need to vote like a Democrat," Shirley Williams urged, drawing applause from the group.

Don Winters, a party loyalist, added: "We need to quit hanging our heads down. Democrats are out there."

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700

jld@star-telegram.com

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1999

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

A sheriff for Tarrant

I recently attended the campaign kick-off reception for David Dunaway, who is running for Tarrant County sheriff. I expected the same old political gathering that I've been to hundreds of times.

Instead, the room was filled with unfamiliar faces — some with cowboy hats and badges. As I milled about, I heard snippets of conversation telling me that these were no ordinary cowboys — I was in the midst of at least 25 Texas Rangers (gun-toters, not bat-swingers).

I then sat down to hear why I should vote for Dunaway. The man himself made introductions, and when he choked up introducing Jennifer, "the mother of my sons, forever," I knew he was sincere.

When I heard his colleagues from the Rangers, who had come across Texas, use words such as *dedicated*, *skilled investigator*, *dependable*, *professional* and *thorough*, I knew that this long, tall Texan would make the quintessential sheriff. Each man who stood up for Dunaway that night pledged to come when Tarrant County has the need.

With the display of loyalty and sincerity in the room, I became certain that Dave Dunaway will return pride and competence to the Sheriff's Department.

Teresa Moore
Fort Worth

GOP sheriff hopefuls question fairness of straw poll in county

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Several Republican candidates for Tarrant County sheriff say they are concerned about the fairness of a Saturday straw poll sponsored by the local GOP, with one candidate saying he has not decided whether he will participate.

"We've just looked at it carefully ... and tried to weigh the pros and cons" on whether to attend the straw poll, said Dee Anderson, an Arlington policeman and one of four candidates attempting to unseat Republican Sheriff David Williams in the March primary.

Anderson said he will formally announce his candidacy today, at which time he will say whether he will participate in the straw poll, scheduled for Saturday at The Ballpark in Arlington.

The straw poll is billed as a fund-raiser for the local Republican Party, and people can vote in it — either through the Internet or at The Ballpark — after buying a \$15 ticket.

The names of Williams and his four challengers will be on the ballot, whether they show up or not.

Anderson would not comment on why he is hesitating deciding whether to appear in person, but other candidates in the race said they were uneasy about "buying votes," even though it's only for a straw poll.

They also said Williams may have an unfair advantage in the contest because the results will be weighted to give more clout to GOP precinct chairmen and other officers and delegates of the party, some of whom are considered to be among the sheriff's strongest

supporters.

"I'm told a lot of people who elected David Williams are also the people who selected the precinct chairs," said one challenger, former North Richland Hills Police Chief Jerry McGlasson.

Calling it a "fun event" and a good idea for the local GOP, McGlasson said he will attend the straw poll, but "I'm not taking it all that seriously."

Tom Davis, the county Republican chairman, said that the straw poll is not rigged and that it is an "insult" to the local GOP for anyone to suspect that it is.

Davis said precinct chairmen and chairwomen will have their votes counted three times, and other officers and delegates of the Republican Party will have their ballots counted twice, simply because they represent groups of supporters, not just themselves. "No one candidate has a lock on

any good portion of them," he said.

Dave Dunaway, a former Texas Ranger and a candidate for sheriff, said he has resisted "advice from various quarters" to stay away from The Ballpark on Saturday. "I support the Republican Party and I will participate," Dunaway said.

Fort Worth policeman Brad Patterson, another candidate, was less enthusiastic. "I think I'm probably going to end up going ... [but] I'm not going to spend any money on

it, and I'm not mounting any effort on it" Patterson said.

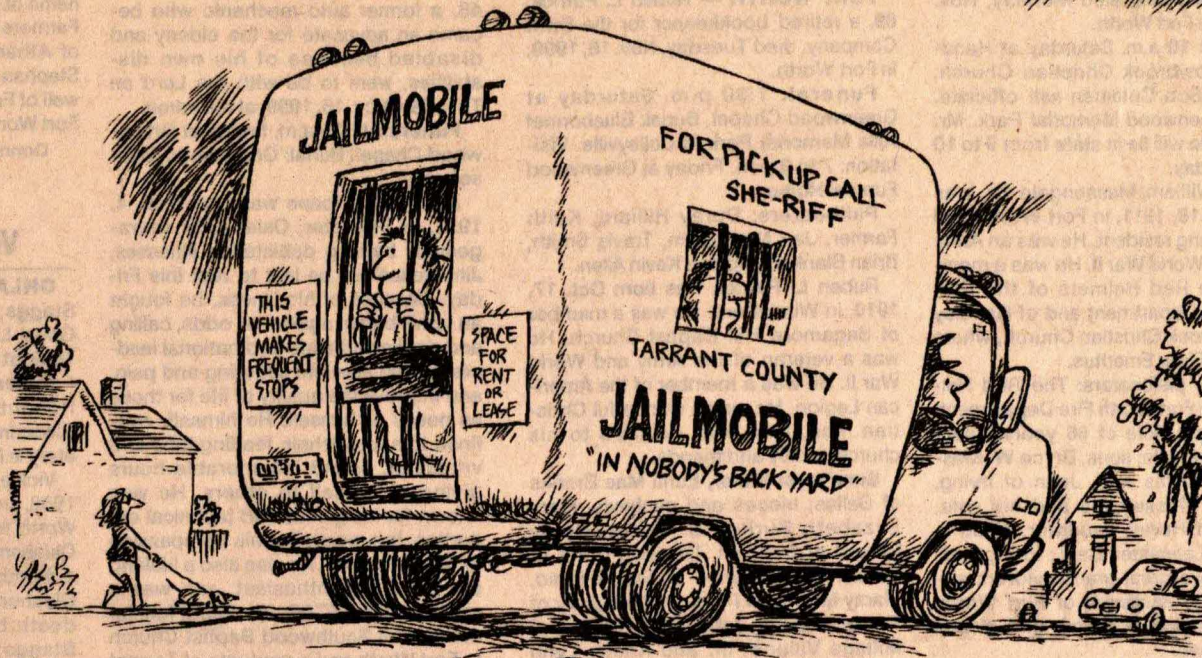
"Having a [political] forum is fine, but to buy votes is something I can't really support," he added.

Williams did not return calls yesterday asking whether he will attend the straw poll. A spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, however, said Williams plans to be there.

■ **ETTA HULME**

ETTA ©1999 FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM
HULME

Friday, November 19, 1999



A BETTER IDEA FOR THE INCARCERATION INDUSTRY

ETTA HULME is the *Star-Telegram's* editorial cartoonist. You can reach her at 390-7665.

Sheriff skips political debate

Williams declines to attend a candidate forum to avoid "questions shouted from the floor."

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams declined to attend a political debate Thursday, saying in a letter that he would not participate in "scorched earth" politics or tolerate "questions shouted from the floor" during his Republican primary campaign.

Williams' written explanation for his absence baffled the approximately 50 Republicans who attended the forum, said Bob Stewart, president of the Northeast Tarrant County Republican Club, which organized the event.

"We're not anti-Williams. Our club is neutral in primary races. We run a fair, evenhanded forum," Stewart said.

Fred Cummings, the club's program chairman and the forum's moderator, said, "There were supporters of David Williams there, and it's just unfortunate that he chose not to attend."

Stewart said Williams did not want to answer questions directly from the audience. Instead, he said, the sheriff asked that questions be written down and given to a moderator to be "screened."

The Northeast Tarrant County Republican Club refused to change its plans. "We feel all our members have a right to ask whatever questions they'd like," Stewart said. "We should not control what our members ask the candidates."

Williams, who is in his second term as sheriff and is seeking his third, did not respond to phone calls yesterday to his office and home.

The forum, held Thursday night in Bedford at Espinosa's Mexican Restaurant, 3314 Harwood Road, allowed each candidate in the sheriff's race an allotted time for an introductory statement before the audience asked questions. Each candidate was then given equal time for closing comments.

The sheriff and his opponents have been invited to two other Republican forums in recent weeks. Williams attended one in

which questions were submitted in writing ahead of time, and he declined to participate in the other, in which the audience asked questions directly.

Dave Dunaway, a former Texas Ranger hoping to unseat Williams, said the Thursday night forum was "enjoyable and fair." Other candidates who attended were Dee Anderson, a spokesman for the Arlington Police Department; Fort Worth policeman Brad Patterson; and Jerry McGlasson, former chief of police in North Richland Hills.

Two hours before the debate began at Espinosa's, Williams faxed Stewart a letter saying he would not attend.

"It would seem that requiring all questions to be submitted in writing to the moderator, before the clock starts, is the best method

for achieving a focused and educational event," Williams wrote. "I was disappointed that you found this basic condition unacceptable."

Prohibiting "questions shouted from the floor" would have helped "raise the debate," Williams said in the letter, adding, "It is important that we Republicans be very cautious about venturing onto ground within our own primary that can easily turn into the politics of scorched earth."

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com



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Sunday, November 21, 1999

Sheriff popular among Tarrant Republican leaders

David Williams wins a straw poll taken among the county's GOP activists.

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Behind big sunglasses, Amy Cain moved easily in the crowd of Republicans who ate barbecue and voted in a straw poll that eventually declared Sheriff David Williams a winner.

A 20-year-old political science major at Texas Christian University, Cain smiled, shook hands and never let on that she

was the enemy — a devout Democrat.

These Republicans seemed friendly enough, she whispered as she surveyed their colorful booths, replete with campaign badges and bumper stickers. But “they all dodged every single question I asked,” Cain said.

She even gave one of the Republican candidates, former Texas Ranger Dave Dunaway, a half-hearted compliment. “I thought he was a very straight arrow,” she said.

But in this contest, under a blue sky at The Ballpark in Arlington, Dunaway came in second, 49 votes behind Williams.

“I appreciate the support. I’m pleasantly surprised,” said Williams, who got 144 votes at The Ballpark, and another 18 votes from people who had cast ballots earlier in the week through the Internet.

Dunaway won the Internet race, garnering 43 votes, but he got only 70 votes at The Ballpark, less than half the number that Williams received.

Jerry McGlasson, a former police chief in North Richland Hills, got 74 votes, 70 at The Ballpark and four from the Internet; and Fort Worth police officer Brad Patterson garnered 25

votes, 22 at The Ballpark and three from the Internet.

Candidate Dee Anderson, an Arlington police spokesman, did not attend yesterday’s straw poll, saying on Thursday that he was uneasy with the \$15 fee attached to each ballot. Anderson likened the process to buying support, rather than earning it. Nevertheless, he received 35 votes in the straw poll, 31 yesterday and four from the Internet.

One vote went to a man who got on the sheriff’s ballot despite describing himself to the crowd as being a window-washer, not a lawman.

Even before it started, challengers predicted that Williams would win the straw poll because of the way votes were counted. They said his strongest support would come from local GOP activists whose individual votes counted twice or three times, depending on their rank in the party.

Tom Davis, chairman of the Tarrant County Republican Party, said those votes were counted more than once simply because they represent the opinions of a group of Republicans, rather than just one. Davis said he was surprised that anyone questioned the motives of the straw poll, conducted, he said, to help the

GOP leadership become more acquainted with the candidates and to raise money for the party.

Art Brender, chairman of the Tarrant County Democratic Party, issued a statement shortly after the Republican straw poll ended.

“Today’s support of Sheriff David Williams ... shows that the local Republican party continues to stand behind the current sheriff and his extremist platform,” Brender said.

He added: “The Sheriff’s Department in Tarrant County has been a joke for too long.”

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1999

Unapproved office built at jail must go

Chaplains' room is fire hazard, imperils state license, officials say.

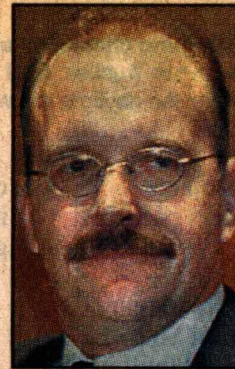
BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County commissioners voted yesterday to tear down an office that the sheriff built in the Green Bay jail without their permission because it violates fire codes and could jeopardize

the jail's state certification.

County officials said they learned that Sheriff David Williams had used his workers during the past month to convert a storage room into an office for volunteer chaplains when a quarterly fire inspection this month turned up violations in the new office.

Williams' spokesman, Capt. Herb Chambers, said the sheriff was out of town and may not
(More on JAIL on Page 17A)



Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams used his workers to convert a storage room into an office for volunteer chaplains.

know of the commissioners' vote. Chambers offered no response to the vote, but said construction costs were covered by donations, not taxpayer dollars.

An official with the Texas Commission on Jail Standards said the unauthorized construction could jeopardize the county's jail certification.

Debbie Fillmore, deputy director for the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, said the county's entire jail system could have been decertified "if we were in fact to come in and do an inspection, because [the office] had been built without approval. ..."

"Any renovations that are done to a jail, we are supposed to have prior approval on," she said. "If you put up walls, that affects the smoke removal system in the jail. ... If there were a fire, the county could be liable."

But Jack Crump, executive director of the commission, said he's not certain the violations are severe enough to shut down the jail system. "We'll take a look at it," he said yesterday.

The Commissioners Court vot-

ed unanimously to have the storage room restored and to deny a request from the sheriff to activate telephone lines to the office.

County officials said they will ask the Sheriff's Department to dismantle the office voluntarily.

Chambers said the office was set up for chaplains who counsel inmates.

County policy requires that before any department alters a county building, plans must be reviewed by the facilities management director and approved by county commissioners, said County Administrator G. K. Maenius.

That did not happen, officials

said.

Gary Kirby, the county's director of facilities management, said he learned of the construction plans when county building engineers reported that the Sheriff's Department had asked them to help build a room for the volunteer chaplains and a lieutenant. The engineers "said they couldn't do it," he said.

Maenius said he told sheriff's officials to halt any unauthorized construction at the Green Bay Unit about three weeks ago. They responded that "they would let me know," the administrator said.

County officials later learned the room had been built and was

in violation of several fire codes.

A quarterly fire inspection Nov. 10 revealed that the office does not have an adequate ceiling or a smoke detector linked to the main fire-alarm system. It also has exposed wiring and is not linked to a sprinkler system, Fire Marshal Randy Renois said in a letter to sheriff's Capt. Dan West.

County officials said they don't understand why the Sheriff's Department built the room without ever indicating that the chaplains needed it.

Commissioners said it's likely that had the Sheriff's Department come to them, the office would have been built with their

approval and in compliance with the fire code.

"If the sheriff would come over and talk to us, we probably would have worked with him. It just infuriates me," Commissioner J.D. Johnson said.

"He has jeopardized our jail standards approval," Johnson said.

Maenius said revenue from the county's general fund was not used to build the office, which is in the jail's confinement area. The Green Bay jail is off Northeast Loop 820 and Interstate 35W.

Sheriff rejects prohibition on chaplains' office

Fire code violations jeopardize jail system's state certification

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The sheriff has directed jail chaplains to continue using an unauthorized office he built in the confinement area of the Green Bay jail, despite a mandate from Tarrant County commissioners to tear it down.

"Continue to march" were the orders from Sheriff David Williams, said his spokesman, Capt. Herb Chambers. "We're doing what we're supposed to do."

Chambers led news media representatives on a tour of the Green Bay facility yesterday, a day after county commissioners voted to dismantle the office — built by inmates in a section of a storage room without state or county permission — because it has several fire code violations that jeopardize the jail's state certification and are a liability.



Williams

Chambers said the department is correcting violations identified by Fire Marshal Randy Renois in a Nov. 10 quarterly inspection. A sprinkler system and ceiling need to be installed, but exposed wiring has been removed and the smoke detector is working, Chambers said.

County policy requires that building modifications be reviewed by the facilities management department and approved by the Commissioners Court.

Debbie Fillmore, deputy director of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, said that "any renovations that are done to a jail" must first get approval from the commission.

She said this week that fire code violations could cost the county jail system its state certification.

"The sheriff knows he's not supposed to build any structure inside a jail confinement area before he gets approval from the jail standards commission," Commissioner J.D. Johnson said yesterday.

Commissioner Glen Whitley agreed, saying that Williams "continues to ignore county noli-cy. I think it speaks volumes that the person who thinks he's the chief law enforcer doesn't ... obey fire codes ... state jail standards or ... the political entity that owns the building."

In their vote Tuesday, commissioners directed other county workers to dismantle the office if the sheriff did not do so voluntarily.

Chambers said Williams didn't need permission to create an office space for chaplains, who formerly used a recreation room desk to prepare sermons.

The office houses files, a desk, books and a computer. After a safety door is installed, the office will be used to counsel inmates, he said.

"If there is a financial involvement, certainly the county commissioners, with the funding, are involved," Chambers said. In this case, he said, construction was covered by donations — not county tax dollars.

County officials learned yesterday that Allen L. Faries — a full-time employee of Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy, a non-profit group that commissioners banned from a downtown county office — is using the new Green Bay office.

In June, Williams contracted with Executive Director Hugh Atwell for \$327,873 to oversee the chaplaincy program, and the

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1999

sheriff agreed to provide office space. But the commissioners prohibited the program from using county space because they hadn't authorized the contract.

Only volunteer chaplains were given permission to use the downtown office.

Atwell's spokesman, Rabbi Marc Ben-Meir, a chaplain and part-time employee of Faith Restorative Justice, said the group was never ordered out of Green Bay.

In the past, Chambers said, chaplains prepared sermons and counseled inmates in an open gymnasium that was noisy and lacked privacy.

Capt. Dan West said the Sher-

iff's Department submitted a request for telephone lines for the office, and for \$250 for pipes for the sprinkler system.

The commissioners rejected the telephone request Tuesday. County officials said they could not recall the sprinkler request.

The Green Bay jail houses about 800 inmates and is off Northeast Loop 820 and Interstate 35W.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

■ EDITORIALS

Unauthorized Office

What more do Tarrant County voters need to convince them that 2000 will be time for a new sheriff?

David Williams has been, through most of his two terms as Tarrant County's sheriff, eccentric and unpredictable. But up until now his antics have fallen short of detrimental to anyone beyond his own department if one doesn't mind spending tax dollars on frivolous lawsuits.

But with the revelation this week that he authorized the physical altering of space within the Green Bay jail facility without filing construction plans with (or receiving prior permission from) the Texas Commission on Jail Standards or the County Commissioners Court, he's gone from eccentric to out of control.

On top of everything else, the do-it-yourself jail improvement project is in violation of state fire codes.

Williams' decision to turn a closet into an office for the jail's volunteer chaplain program could possibly risk the county's jail certification — the security of which Williams has always boasted about dur-

ing his tenure. And Williams, according to his spokesman, has no intention of dismantling the office even though the commissioners have told him to do so.

Yes, the sheriff is charged by state law to operate the county jail, but he does not own it. It is not *his* jail. It belongs to the taxpayers. Williams is the hired help. As such, he should not be undertaking construction projects willy-nilly of county policies, much less other state laws that require compliance with fire codes.

Frankly, his actions smack of insubordination.

This is going to read as redundant, but it is still worth noting that Williams was unavailable for comment.

There's no telling why Williams decided to go forward with this project without first asking the commissioners for approval. Perhaps he thought they would turn him down. Maybe, but then it would have been the commissioners answering for their actions. Williams might have walked away looking reasonable.

Right now he just looks more and more like a man who's going to need a new job come Jan. 1, 2001.

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Selected vs. elected

Concerning the Nov. 19 clarification on Jerry McGlasson's quote that Tarrant County Republican precinct chairs are "selected" by the people who elected Sheriff David Williams:

I am the incumbent *elected* (not *selected*) Republican chairman in Pct. 2462. I took personally this condescending, uninformed statement that the *Star-Telegram* did not bother to check before publishing: I was elected the first time in my precinct by one vote in a runoff election!

I took the time to check the register of Republic precinct chairs and learned that out of 534 precincts, 316 have a registered Republican chair. Only 18 precinct chairs have not been ratified by the votes of the registered voters within their individual precincts, which amounts to only 5 percent of the total number of duly elected chairs.

The honorable, twice-elected Sheriff Williams will soon be elected to serve his third term because we expect at least the knowledge taught in elementary civics classes to be with the Republican candidate for sheriff.

The consolation for McGlasson is that he will always identify with the eternal statement made by Job: "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know!"

Doyle Jones
Arlington



**BUD
KENNEDY**

COMMENTARY

Sheriff took the lead in the Parade of Lights, but not by invitation

For \$1 million, name the place you'd last expect to find Sheriff David Williams:

- On a TV quiz show,
- At Commissioners Court, or
- Leading the downtown Fort Worth holiday parade?

If you guessed the parade, wrong. Sheriff Williams' float cut in front of the annual Parade of Lights last Fri-

day night, barging in ahead of the Grand Marshal, news anchor Brad Wright of KXAS/Channel 5.

"The sheriff took it upon himself to be in front of the parade," said the parade coordinator, Donna VanNess of organizer Downtown Fort Worth Inc.

Wright laughed and said that it "fits in with all the odd things he's done."

From the lead convertible, he

couldn't see atop the intruding float, atop a high truck-drawn horse trailer.

"If I'd known that was the sheriff, I'd have told the driver to step on the gas," he said, laughing. "Our convertible could have outmaneuvered that big float."

Instead of taking his assigned place in line — No. 23, somewhere behind state lawmakers, ahead of the Wheel-

ie-ing Elvises and the Frog Horn — Williams showed up in the wrong place and demanded to cut first in line. That was the description VanNess gave yesterday after interviewing parade volunteers.

A sheriff's honor guard was carrying flags to lead the parade. Williams' float lined up behind the honor guard,

(More on KENNEDY on Page 5B)

several blocks from the staging area assigned in written parade instructions faxed to Williams' office.

"Everybody knew he wasn't supposed to be there," VanNess said. "He knew.

"When it came time to step off, his people said he wanted to go next. Our people out there were volunteers. They weren't in a position to hold up the sheriff."

At Williams' office, spokesman Herb Chambers said it was not clear yesterday why the sheriff's float went first. At least one volunteer sent Williams' driver to the wrong place, Chambers said, adding, "The grand marshal doesn't always go at the front of a parade, does he?"

No, but Fort Worth's Parade of Lights is careful about who goes where.

Parades are notorious for behind-the-scenes political jockeying, particularly this close to an election. That's why the Parade of Lights sticks to a rigid lineup for guest lawmakers: federal, state, county, city, public schools.

Williams not only cut in front of Wright, he also cut ahead of state Sen. Mike Moncrief and some of Williams' fellow Republicans, state Reps. Kim Brimer, Bill Carter and

Anna Mowery.

In Williams' remote office at a county jail in far north Fort Worth, assistant Sandra Peel said she passed along the right parade assignment.

Told that Williams' float rolled out first, she said, "Uh-oh."

This is not the first time that Williams has seized the spotlight. Wright remembered emceeding a National Victim Center luncheon where Williams showed up unexpectedly and insisted on taking the stage.

Of course, we are accustomed to the sheriff claiming that he governs the county under the Magna Carta, suing to take tax money directly under old English law, demanding

"sovereignty" under the old law of the Republic of Texas and generally behaving like a refugee from the Art Bell show.

Then he acts like a spoiled brat when anyone questions the wasted county equipment, the triple-over-time costs in the jail or the use of prisoners' money to hire paid evangelists.

Speaking of evangelists, there is a verse in the Bible that Williams should keep in mind. It's Matthew 20:16:

"So the last shall be first, and the first last."

Bud Kennedy's column appears
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
(817) 390-7538
budk@star-telegram.com

Area's scam artists expect easy pickings during the holidays

As if Tarrant County's deputy sheriffs did not have enough problems already. Now, somebody is using their name to run a holiday scam.

A 40-year-old east Fort Worth woman thought she could help give some child a Christmas toy. She handed \$15 to a man who came collecting after a phone call "from the Tarrant County Deputy Sheriff's Association."



**BUD
KENNEDY**

COMMENTARY

She's no dummy. She's even a law enforcement professional.

But she was conned. The deputies' group is not running any kind of phone (More on KENNEDY on Page 4B)

or door-to-door charity drive, President David Mann said yesterday.

It's holiday season. Meaning it's also scam season.

Remember: Texas law does not protect us from fake charities.

Never — ever — give money by phone.

The Fort Worth woman was a target for a typical shady phone sales operation. The trickiest send a courier for the gift, so they can't be arrested on charges of mail fraud.

"Most of these phone calls — if not all — are totally fake," Mann said.

"The money never goes to kids. It goes right into that guy's

pocket or to some shysters with a phone room."

Fort Worth police and county deputies are investigating several reports, he said. The "deputy sheriffs" identity is the one most often used by rip-off artists, because it works countywide and, lately, because it earns the trust of church members who support volunteer chaplains in the county jail.

In 1993, the deputies' name was used to sell tickets to a phony country music concert. The telephone scam artists then also mentioned a national child-fingerprinting charity.

This year's version sounds like a rerun: The callers also mention a "safe kids" campaign, Mann said. He tracked one report to a fake address on Texas 10 in Northeast Tarrant County.

"We want to make sure citizens stay safe and support good local

charities," Mann said. "And we want to make sure the good name of county deputies is not lost. ... We're the ones out there working hard and trying to uphold the law."

Give to people you know — or organizations you trust.

Mann suggested the Salvation Army Angel Tree program at malls. Every TV and radio station seems to have a holiday charity these days, but I think the oldest must be the *Star-Telegram's* Goodfellow Fund.

I thought flimsy police charities would go away after the Texas Legislature passed a law in 1997 requiring the "troopers" and "police league" callers to explain that as little as 10 cents of every dollar even goes beyond the phone room, much less to any genuine charity.

A spokesman for a statewide police organization, the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT), said then that Tarrant County is considered a "lucrative market" for phone scams.

CLEAT lobbyist Charley Wilkison, pushing for stricter regulation, said telemarketers brag that "the harvest is ripe" in Tarrant County and that "senior citizens are a really big target."

And it's not just the holiday.

Con artists have been working the county all year, claiming to collect for "the firefighters' widows and orphans" or "the Oklahoma victims" or "the Wedgwood victims" and probably by now, for "the Aggie bonfire victims."

And that was before scam season.

Pepper spray use debated at hearing

Arguments heard at demotion appeal by sheriff's deputy

BY NEIL STRASSMAN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The appeal of a Tarrant County sheriff's officer demoted in September from lieutenant to deputy for using pepper spray on an inmate quickly turned into a forum yesterday on the use of the noxious chemical in the jail.

Attorneys representing the Sheriff's Department and Deputy Ray Grimes, 44, the former lieutenant, both showed the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission graphic videotapes of inmates being sprayed with the gas.

The first tape, presented by Assistant District Attorney David Hudson, showed an inmate with psychiatric problems being sprayed with oleoresin capsicum, commonly called OC gas or pepper spray, 18 minutes after he spit and threw toilet water at a jailer on March 27. The inmate was being watched by jailers because he was a suicide risk, Hudson said.

The jail's emergency response team was called to respond to the incident.

"At no point does he [Grimes] try to talk to the inmate to resolve the problem, which is what jail policy requires," Hudson said, as he let the commissioners view 18 minutes of tape showing the inmate standing passively behind his cell door.

Then the emergency team, wearing protective gear and gas masks, arrived. Grimes told the inmate to step forward and to put his hands through a slot in the cell door. Instead, the inmate cowered against the back wall. The team

rushed into the cell, tackled the inmate, hoisted him up and held him upside down while Grimes administered the pepper spray at close range.

The tape shows the inmate being taken to a shower to wash, and then being chained to a board and placed back in a cell.

Hudson said Grimes had previously been disciplined for improper use of the spray.

"He had a history of not properly using the gas and had been counseled that he was overusing it," Hudson said.

Capt. Ralph Hayes, Grimes' supervisor, testified that he thought the gas was being used too quickly in the jail.

But David Sloane, Grimes' attorney, said his client, a nine-year employee of the department and a law enforcement officer for nearly 20 years, was simply following the Sheriff's Department's policy on using the gas.

The department's written policy restricts use of the spray to situations in which an inmate appears to be a danger to himself, other inmates or to jailers.

It is department policy to videotape all calls for an emergency team in the jail, and Sloane produced a 20-minute tape showing several cases of inmates being sprayed. Some of the inmates, like the one Grimes sprayed, had psychiatric problems, but few of those shown were abusive or unruly.

Sloane's tape showed deputies spraying inmates through the bars of their cells while they were sitting naked on their bunks.

"Grimes was following policy set in the jail," Sloane said, indicating that the policy in use differed from the written rules for use of the spray. None of the people shown administering pepper spray in Sloane's videotape was disciplined, he said.

During a break in the hearing, Grimes said he is being "singled out" and has been unfairly targeted for discipline. He is seeking reinstatement to his former rank.

The hearing will continue Monday.

Ex-lieutenant shouldn't have sprayed inmate, lawyer says

BY LINDA P. CAMPBELL
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — An attorney for Tarrant County tried to show yesterday that a former Sheriff's Department lieutenant diverged from standard practice when he pepper-sprayed a jail inmate being restrained in his cell by other officers.

Also during the second day of a civil service hearing for Deputy Ray Grimes, 44, the sheriff's training academy coordinator testified that he wouldn't have used the spray under the circumstances depicted in a videotape of the incident.

"In my opinion, I saw no reason for the guy to be sprayed," said Tommv Hathorn, who teaches

the use of oleoresin capsicum, commonly called OC gas or pepper spray.

Grimes was demoted from lieutenant to deputy in September because of the March 27 incident, in which an inmate with psychiatric problems was pepper-sprayed 18 minutes after he spit and threw toilet water at a jailer. Grimes sprayed the inmate after five members of the jail's emergency response team, wearing protective gear and gas masks, entered the cell, tackled the inmate and held him upside down.

Grimes is seeking a return to his former rank, arguing that he was following Sheriff's Department procedures for the use of OC gas.

On Friday, lawyers with the district attorney's office showed civil service commissioners a graphic videotape of the spraying.

Grimes' attorney, David Sloane, countered with videotapes of other supervisors using pepper spray.

But yesterday, Assistant District Attorney David Hudson tried to show that the other sprayings were justified.

In one case, an inmate who was sprayed while sitting naked on a bunk had refused to leave his cell after smearing feces on the walls and floor.

Another inmate refused to give up a razor blade in his mouth.

Capt. Ralph Hayes testified that spraying in other cases was warranted because inmates refused to comply with orders and had objects such as a plastic spoon, a pen and a piece of metal broken from a clipboard that could be used as weapons.

But Sloane challenged the distinction.

"How does throwing feces differ from throwing toilet water?" he asked Hayes. "Other than the smell and appearance, do you see any greater biohazard?"

Hayes replied, "Yes, sir, I do."

The department's written policy limits use of the spray to situations in which an inmate appears to be a danger to himself, to other inmates or to jailers or when physical assault is imminent.

Sloane also questioned whether

Grimes had shown a pattern of improper use of pepper spray.

Records show that Grimes was disciplined for pepper-spray use in June 1998, but Sloane argued that that was for actions of a sergeant under Grimes' supervision.

Hayes testified that he had talked with Grimes repeatedly but usually didn't file formal reports about the incidents.

Grimes, who has spent nine years with the Sheriff's Department and 20 years in law enforcement, has also taught use of OC gas at the academy.

Russell Roark, a member of the emergency response team involved in the March spraying, testified that he had never seen Grimes abuse an inmate or use

excessive force but that he would use pepper spray if he considered it necessary for officers' safety.

During cross-examination, Hathorn said that he teaches pressure-point control techniques but that officers rarely use them when they get to the jail.

"Why teach them if they're never going to be used?" he said.

"Has anybody every come to you from the Sheriff's Department and looked at this as a training issue rather than a discipline issue?" Sloane asked.

"No," Hathorn replied.

The hearing is scheduled to resume at the commission's January meeting.

Linda P. Campbell, (817) 390-7867
lcampbell@star-telegram.com

Four men arrested in 1998 raid sue county

BY NEIL STRASSMAN

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Four men arrested in a Tarrant County Sheriff's Department raid on sexually oriented businesses in 1998 have sued the county, claiming their civil rights were violated.

The men, who were cashiers and maintenance workers at the Log Cabin and Adult Variety bookstores, were arrested Feb. 4, 1998, during an all-night raid on nude dancing clubs, topless bars and adult bookstores that didn't have permits posted or had them posted in the wrong location.

Dancers, bartenders, cooks, disc jockeys, waitresses, club managers and other workers were arrested and jailed for 24 hours or longer, but none of the 55 people arrested was charged with a crime.

Sheriff's officials said they undertook the operation based on complaints from citizens groups.

Many of the clubs and bookstores had 1991 letters from the Sheriff's Department that served as temporary permits until a permit hearing could be held. The hearings were never held and the clubs, often patrolled by deputies, stayed open for years.

Attorney Steve Swander, who filed the lawsuit Monday on behalf of the four men, said the arrests were made without a warrant and were designed to close the bookstores and dancing clubs.

The arrests violated their right to expression, which is constitutionally protected, Swander wrote in the lawsuit. Basing the arrests on an improper posting of a permit was a "a mere pretext to suppress expression," Swander said in the suit.

None of the bookstore workers could be reached to comment.

Tarrant County commissioners have agreed to expunge the arrests and pay the filing fee for expungement to the district clerk. The four men did not say in the lawsuit how much money they are seeking from the county.

The agreement to clear the record of those arrested was not an admission of liability on the part of the commissioners, and those

arrested did not waive their right to claim damages, Assistant District Attorney Larry Thompson said.

Tarrant County regulations require sexually oriented businesses to obtain a county permit and to renew it annually.

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Elected vs. selected

Jerry McGlasson was correctly quoted in the Nov. 19 *Star-Telegram* as saying that the incumbent Tarrant County sheriff would win the "straw poll" conducted as a fund-raiser by the Republican Party because those who elected the sheriff also selected the party's precinct chairs. Doyle Jones (Nov. 27 letter) took offense where none was intended or warranted.

The dictionary says that *elect* can mean "to choose; select." If the two words can be used interchangeably, why did Jones author a bristling letter to the editor?

Perhaps his pique is less with the differentiation between *elected* and *selected* than with the dawning revelation that McGlasson is better qualified to be the sheriff of Tarrant County than is the incumbent. It is my belief that in the March 14 primary, Jones' preferred candidate will be deselected by the electorate. It is time that we elected a professional like Jerry McGlasson to this office.

Paul Reed
Azle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1999

Pay cut planned for office

Next Tarrant County tax collector to get less money

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County's next tax collector shouldn't plan on getting the annual \$102,108 salary plus \$2,928 car allowance enjoyed by incumbent June Garrison.

When the county's top tax official takes office in 2001, the salary will look more like that of the county and district clerks — \$95,112 a year, with no car allowance.

Yesterday, county commissioners discussed equalizing a salary scale that was knocked off balance more than 15 years ago when commissioners boosted the salary of then-retiring tax collector Reed Stewart by \$5,000.

The salary hasn't been readjusted since.

The commissioners also said they want the salary to reflect the pared-down duties of the job. The tax collector is no longer required to register voters or appraise properties.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said he would like the district and county clerks, tax assessor, sheriff and four commissioners to have matching salaries. He said he also wants to consider decreasing the sheriff's salary and increasing those of the district and county clerks.

Sheriff David Williams, whose salary will be \$105,492 next year, is the highest-paid. He drives a county vehicle. The commissioners' salaries will be \$95,712 next year, with an \$8,160 vehicle allowance.

Commissioner Glen Whitley said he is reluctant to slash the sheriff's salary because his department staff is significantly larger than that of other elected officials.

Both the tax collector's and sheriff's positions will be up for election in November. Garrison announced Dec. 3 that she won't seek a fifth term. Williams is seeking re-election.

In other business, the commis-

sioners voted to grant tax abatements to two Arlington businesses — General Motors' automobile plant and Prologis/Mackie, a GM supplier.

GM received tax abatement of up to 80 percent on an estimated \$555 million in real and personal property improvements related to a new truck line.

That amounts to \$11.3 million in county and hospital district taxes that GM will not have to pay to the county over the 10 years, according to the county administrator's office. The vote was unanimous.

Whitley was the only commissioner to oppose a 10-year abatement of up to 60 percent for Prologis/Mackie. He said the county has to draw the line on granting abatements to suppliers of major corporations that already receive tax breaks if it wants to save taxpayers money.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram

The Dallas Morning News

Thursday, December 16, 1999

Tarrant sheriff labeled deserter in Army files

By Dan Malone
and Jason Sickles
Staff Writers of The Dallas Morning News

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FORT WORTH — When he first ran for Tarrant County sheriff, David Williams touted his military police experience, but records obtained by *The Dallas Morning News* show that his Army career ended shortly after he went AWOL and was labeled a deserter.

Sheriff Williams, who is in his seventh year as the county's top law enforcement officer, did not respond Wednesday to interview requests. Aides and family members said they were unaware of the military's record of his 1976 desertion and defended his

Williams silent on '76 incident

character.

"You know, he's a good man," said his former wife, Rhonda Strom of Illinois. "He's a good Christian. I don't know why you want to persecute him. He does a good job as sheriff."

A top administrator in the Sheriff's Department was flabbergasted by the charge that the sheriff was once AWOL, or absent without leave.

"What?" Capt. Herb Chambers asked. "The sheriff? Our sheriff?"

Gene Williams, the sheriff's father,

also a military veteran, questioned how his son could have left the Army honorably with such a blemish on his record.

"I know he's got an honorable discharge," Mr. Williams said from his home in Norman, Okla. "You can't get an honorable discharge and go AWOL that I know of. It doesn't make good sense to me.

"You've got somebody else's record, as far as I know."

The News requested Sheriff Williams' military record from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, identifying him by birth date and Social Security number.

The records, released under provision, Please see TARRANT on Page 27A.

sions of the federal Freedom of Information Act, show that Sheriff Williams was listed as AWOL on April 2, 1976, and was "dropped from rolls (desertion)" on May 6, 1976.

Before being AWOL, Sheriff Williams was listed as a "senior military policeman." But on May 29, 1976, according to the record, his rank was changed to "military policeman." On July 13, he left the service, about six weeks shy of his fourth anniversary.

The records don't reveal why the 22-year-old senior MP went AWOL, where he went or what he was doing.

Nor do the records state what type of discharge he received when he left the service three months after disappearing. The character of a service member's discharge, officials said, cannot be released to the public.

Daran Neal, a spokesman at Fort Sill, Okla., said honorable discharges are sometimes given to service members who have gone AWOL. "It's possible," he said. "All circumstances are different. It could happen."

Ms. Strom, who has remained friends with her former husband, said she was unaware that Sheriff Williams had been AWOL. She said she thought he might have experienced a "religious crisis" about the time that records show he was AWOL.

"That was probably about the time he was saved, I don't know," she said, referring to his Christian faith. "My leaving was probably harder on him than he thought. There's nothing I can say about him but good things."

Tarrant sheriff went AWOL, records show

Continued from Page 1A.

Sheriff Williams entered the military Aug. 30, 1972, and was stationed with the 545th Military Police Company at Fort Hood, Texas. He was reassigned in November 1974 to the 546th Military Police Company at Fort Sill.

Sheriff's Department Executive Chief Deputy Hank Pope said he had relayed *The News'* written interview request to the sheriff Wednesday.

"I delivered the message, and we delivered the letter," Chief Pope said. "I feel as though he's going to respond, but I can't tell you when."

About a month before his election in 1992, Sheriff Williams told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that his experience in the military police was invaluable.

"I wouldn't trade the experience for anything," he said in the Oct. 11, 1992, profile. "It provided a good alternative, plus the opportunity to learn law enforcement with one of the biggest police forces in the world."

Following his re-election in 1996, a biographical sketch noted that Sheriff Williams "began his law enforcement career in 1972 as a military policeman in the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division."

Sheriff Williams' tenure has been marked by political quarrels and criticism from police chiefs, county officials and the Republican Party over his use of military equipment, his management style and his supervision of the county jail.

Before becoming sheriff in 1992, he worked as a police officer in several small Oklahoma towns, in security for Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Fort Worth and as a drug-education officer in Haltom City.

In a routinely high-profile job, Sheriff Williams has at times seemed reluctant to enter the spotlight, and even his own deputies have reported going long periods without seeing him.

Three fellow Republicans and one Democrat have filed to run against him in the next election. Sheriff Williams, 45, picked up his filing material Wednesday but did not immediately submit the documents.

Capt. Chambers said AWOL reports on military records sometimes look worse than the underlying facts. He speculated that the sheriff's problems might have stemmed from his divorce.

"If I was a betting man," Capt. Chambers said, "I'd bet you dollars to doughnuts — and you know how important doughnuts are to law enforcement officers" — that whatever trouble the sheriff had with the Army was minor.

"There could be a logical answer," he said. "It could have been he was lost in a snowstorm and couldn't get to work on time."

Capt. Chambers said he had not talked to the sheriff about the issue or discussed his military records with him.

"It would behoove him to talk to you," Capt. Chambers said. "He has not talked to me about it, which is interesting in and of itself."

DAVID WILLIAMS' MILITARY FILE

Military records show Senior Military Policeman David Williams was reported AWOL, or absent without leave, on April 2, 1976. On May 6, he was officially classified as a deserter. On May 27, his status as senior MP was changed to simply MP. Other military records show that he was discharged on July 13, 1976.

SECTION VII - CURRENT AND PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS
RECORD OF ASSIGNMENTS

EFFECTIVE DATE	DUTY MOSC	PRINCIPAL DUTY	ORGANIZATION AND STATION OR OVERSEA COUNTRY	NON-RATED DAYS		NON-RATED DAYS		TYPE REPORT
				BP	YR/MO	EP	YR/MO	
741104	95E20	Military Policeman	546th MF Co. Ft Sill OK	7412				
750207	95B20	Senior Military Policeman	546th MF Co Ft Sill OK				7508	REG
750901	95B20	Sr MP	546th MP Co Ft Sill, OK					
750402		AWOL						
760506		DROPPED FROM ROLLS (Desertion)						
		Military Policeman	546th MP Co Ft Sill OK					
		Military Policeman	546th MP Co Ft Sill OK					

35. CONT

Key points in Sheriff Williams' service record

SOURCE: National Personnel Records Center

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1999



Star-Telegram/CAROLYN BAUMAN

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams smiles and waves as he leaves his Watauga home yesterday afternoon.

Sheriff's discharge honorable

Spokesman defends Williams after report of Army desertion

BY KAREN ROUSE, MAX B. BAKER
AND BOB MAHLBURG
Star-Telegram Staff Writers

FORT WORTH — Records show that Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams received an honorable discharge from the Army, despite leaving his unit without permission in 1976 for what a spokesman described as personal reasons involving a divorce.

The two-term Republican sheriff declined to discuss his actions yesterday but said he intends to call a news conference today.

"He has a very honest explanation," said Capt. Herb Chambers, his spokesman. "That which has been implicated is incorrect, totally incorrect."

Chambers would only say that Williams' reasons for leaving were "personal" and related to his divorce from his first wife, Rhonda Strom.

"It was one thing in his ... file," he said. "It's a nothing. But if you're trying to make waves, oh, boy, that's a biggie."

Interest in Williams' military career was prompted by a report yesterday in *The Dallas Morning News* that Williams was labeled a deserter for being absent without leave for

(More on WILLIAMS on Page 19A)

"He has a very honest explanation. That which has been implicated is incorrect, totally incorrect."

— Capt. Herb Chambers
sheriff's spokesman.

Inside

► Several people with military backgrounds could not make sense of yesterday's news concerning Sheriff David Williams' record. **19A**

Staff writers Deanna Boyd, Becheta Jackson, Rebeca Rodriguez and Chris Vaughn contributed to this report.

more than 30 days in 1976 during his second two-year tour of duty.

"I am very disturbed about what was printed," Williams said last night. He declined to comment further.

Williams, 45, served as a military police officer. He entered the Army in 1972 at Fort Hood, was honorably discharged in 1974 and returned to the Army that year. He was honorably discharged in 1976 from Fort Sill, Okla., according to military records that Williams provided to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education in Austin.

Citing military records from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, the *News* reported that Williams was listed as AWOL on April 2, 1976, and was "dropped from rolls (desertion)" May 6, 1976.

Officials at the Pentagon and at Fort Sill said it would be unusual for a soldier to receive an honorable discharge after deserting his unit.

Desertion is a more serious offense than going AWOL. The military doesn't consider a soldier a deserter until he has been gone for 30 days, at which time officials notify federal authorities that the soldier is wanted.

An honorable discharge for a deserter is "not prohibited," said Elaine Kanellis, a spokeswoman for the Army. "A lot depends on the circumstances of the desertion. A local commander likely made that decision."

Typically, a captain or a major signs a soldier's discharge. A general signed Williams' 1976 discharge; a major signed his first, in 1974.

Daran Neal, a spokesman at Fort Sill, said a "very small percentage" of deserters receive an honorable discharge.

Williams moved to Fort Worth from Oklahoma in 1980 and was chief of security for TV evangelist Kenneth Copeland's ministry before becoming a Haltom City police officer. He was elected sheriff in 1992.

Williams' tenure as sheriff has been marked by controversy, particularly after a September 1997 helicopter crash that killed two of his deputies.

Since then, Williams — who rarely appears in public or talks to the news media — has sparred with county commissioners over cuts in his budget, his department's fleet of take-home patrol vehicles, unauthorized construction in the jail and salaries for his deputies and jailers.

Williams' father, Gene F. Williams, is a 69-year-old Army veteran who lives in Norman, Okla., where Williams grew up.

He said early yesterday that he hadn't spoken to his son, the oldest of three, since the desertion issue became public.

"I wouldn't think he'd be taking it too well," Gene Williams said.

"Naturally when someone goes back 20 [years] and digs up someone or something that possibly isn't even true — and I understand it's possible. I know he's got political enemies — I hate it."

It is unclear whether Williams' military record will affect his duties as sheriff.

County Attorney Marvin Collins said the district attorney's office will review the information.

"That doesn't mean there is a problem or there isn't a problem. We're just going to review the material that has been revealed," he said. "I'm not at all sure it has any legal significance. But again, it's early to say."

County Republican Chairman Tom Davis declined to comment on Williams' record but said Williams can probably count on questions from his opponents in the sheriff's race, considered the hottest in the county.

Williams has yet to file for a third term, although his campaign picked up an application for the March 14 Republican primary. Three other Republicans have filed to run.

Tarrant County District Clerk Tom Wilder said Williams assured him in 1992 that his military history was sound.

"David told me numerous times there was nothing in his background that would bite us," said Wilder, who was not in office at the time but was Williams' campaign manager.

Steve Weinberg, vice chairman of the Tarrant County GOP, said he wants to hear Williams' side.

"I think the absolute important thing for him to do now is to hold a news conference and tell us," Weinberg said.

Dee Anderson, a spokesman for the Arlington police and one of Williams' primary opponents, said the sheriff's military record "will be a campaign issue and it will hang out there" until it's resolved.

Doyle Jones, an ardent Williams supporter, said his faith is only strengthened by the latest revelations.

"We need to know more details before we pass judgment," Jones said. "Knowing David Williams to be a Christian man, there was something that must have happened to keep him away from his duties.

"I love the man and I'll do what I can to get him elected. ... I've heard nothing to change my mind."

Some Tarrant County residents questioned yesterday expressed support for Williams.

"At 22 most people make a lot of crazy mistakes," said Kathy Ivey, a 35-year-old X-ray technician from Arlington.

"I figure if the Army has forgiven him, I will, too," said Gregory Oliver, 49, a Mansfield computer software consultant.

"I would like to know the circumstances. Was he excused or was it a screw-up in the records? Did he decide to run off to Canada, then come back?"

Fort Worth homemaker Kenda Fletcher, 41, was less forgiving.

"I have more of a problem with the sheriff not being willing to work with county commissioners, not wanting to be accountable. That's not how leaders should act, and is much more serious than the AWOL situation."

Sheriff's record puzzles veterans

BY CHRIS VAUGHN
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

Like several people who once wore a U.S. military uniform, B.G. Burkett couldn't make sense of yesterday's news concerning Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams.

The Dallas Morning News reported yesterday, based on military records, that Williams was declared a deserter by the Army in 1976 after being absent without leave, or AWOL, for more than 30 days.

But records also indicate that Williams earned an honorable discharge that summer, a combination that raised eyebrows in the veterans community.

"It's very rare for a guy to be in deserter status and then a few weeks later get an honorable discharge," said Burkett, a Vietnam veteran in Dallas and an author.

Desertion, in the ranks of those who served, is treated seriously — a "sin" in the eyes of veterans, one said. "The veterans community frowns on that," said Fort Worth's Herb Odell, commissioner of the Texas Veterans Commission, a state agency.

But Odell was willing to give Williams the benefit of the doubt.

"There's the key right there — find out the reason why he left," he said. "Maybe there was some sympathetic reason he wasn't drummed out of the service."

Burkett, whose book *Stolen Valor* uncovered phony veterans across the country, said most soldiers who go AWOL do so for personal reasons,

not Army reasons.

Although data on desertion rates in the Army in the 1970s was not available yesterday, several military experts said they would guess that desertion was less a problem when Williams served than a few years earlier during the Vietnam War when the draft was in effect.

"I don't recall it being a problem," said Julius Becton, a retired three-star general who commanded the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood in the mid-1970s. "Anyone who served after 1973 was a volunteer."

Becton, who later served as president of Prairie View A&M University, said desertion has always been viewed differently within the Army. Some units would consider it more serious than others, he said.

"While the Army regulations and policies may be one thing, how the individual unit dealt with it may be another," Becton said.

Joseph Dawson, director of the Military Studies Institute at Texas A&M University and a GI in the early '70s, recalled a fairly forgiving Army to soldiers who messed up.

"My impression was that the Army all but bent over backwards to be reasonable to assist soldiers," Dawson said. "The Army didn't want to have a soldier leave the service with a bad-conduct discharge. They would make a real effort to bring the soldier around and give him a second chance."

Chris Vaughn, (817) 390-7547
cvaughn@star-telegram.com

Displaying a curious collection of medals

Speaking of military history, I've got a question.

Where did the Tarrant County sheriff's spokesman get those flashy medals?

Maybe you saw Capt. Herb Chambers on TV this week. You didn't see much of Sheriff David Williams, who went into hiding for

two days until he emerged yesterday for a truth extraction.

Whenever the sheriff goes into his bunker, the TV spotlight falls on Chambers — and his huge brace of 15 military-style ribbons.

The guy wears more decorations than the Galleria's Christmas tree. He could be mistaken for the

leader of a Third World army.

Those ribbons mean a lot to law officers. They mean heroism, bravery, accomplishment.

Fifteen is a lot.

Particularly for a guy who just started work May 14.

If we're delving into the military

credibility of the Tarrant County sheriff's office, a good place to start might be on Chambers' shirt.

Chambers, 60, of Granbury, was not a certified Texas law officer when he came to Williams' department. For the past 22 years, he had been the regional coordinator for the National Rifle Association.

Chambers has said he worked in the 1960s as an officer and deputy in Scottsdale and Tucson, Ariz., and that he is a "life certified" officer in Nebraska. He has taught college courses in criminal justice.

But — 15 ribbons?

"I got some years ago in other states where the rules vary with what is practiced here," he said. "But they were all earned in law enforcement.

"I'm not going to tell you where or how. Because I know then — you'll just start trying to dig something up."



**BUD
KENNEDY**

■
COMMENTARY

You know, if I had won 15 ribbons, I don't think I'd mind anybody digging it up.

Chambers went on: "I have multiple commendations from a lot of people. I've got a lot of war stories from a lot of years."

He once helped deliver a baby, he said, and saved "more than one" life — "but I'm not going to go into that"

Some of the awards are for education, he said, "for advanced degrees."

"There's three or four academic-type awards. I wear them all because I qualify for them."

Although he wouldn't say exactly what the awards meant, he did say where he got them.

A Garland advertising specialties company, Davis & Stanton Inc., sells them by mail. Cost: \$5 each.

"There's a form," he said. "You just fill it out."

By phone from Garland, sales agent Judy Lane said many police agencies buy awards. "Most have a limit," she said. "They only let officers wear about four at a time."

Not here.

Many other Tarrant County

deputies proudly wear earned awards, including some Purple Hearts. They were nominated for the awards by a supervisor and approved by a deputies' committee.

Lt. Ron Miller chairs that committee. He said officers from other departments normally bring paperwork to show that they earned their awards. Chambers' "did not come through the committee," he said.

Chambers would not say who awarded his.

"I'm not getting into that," he said.

"It has been unfortunate talking to you. Goodbye."

Bud Kennedy's column appears
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
(817) 390-7538

budk@star-telegram.com

SHERIFF'S MILITARY DISCHARGE

Papers signed years after he left service

BY CHRIS VAUGHN
AND JACK DOUGLAS JR.
AND KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writers

FORT WORTH — Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams' honorable discharge was not signed until at least 3½ years after he left the Army amid a charge of desertion, military records show.

Brig. Gen. Charles F. Briggs

said he likely signed the document after 1979 when he commanded a center that responded to soldiers' appeals to upgrade their discharge status. Williams was released from his second tour of duty in 1976 at Fort Sill, Okla., after he was absent without leave for more than 30 days, military records show.

(More on SHERIFF on Page 15A)



Star-Telegram/RODGER MALLISON

Sheriff David Williams holds a copy of his honorable discharge certificate at a news conference yesterday. Williams admitted he was AWOL twice in his Army career.

Yesterday, Williams described his desertion as an "aberration."

"I was drinking pretty heavily in those days," he said. "That probably was not an element that contributed to good, sound judgment."

"... There are parts of the five weeks ... that I don't remember where I was at."

He said he had made repeated requests of his supervisors to use 72 days' leave that he had earned to address problems related to his first wife and their son.

After three months of being refused, Williams said, "one day, I finally told the sergeant: 'I quit. I want out.' So I left."

"This was a significant lapse of judgment on my part. I've never done anything like that, ever. There's no excuse for going AWOL. It was an aberration of judgment."

Williams also questioned the fairness of the release of his military assignment records and accused the media of working with his political opponents and singling him out less than four months before the March 14 Republican primary. Williams, who is in his second term as sheriff, has said he intends to seek reelection.

He first sought the sheriff's post in 1992, using a law-and-order campaign that included references to his career as a military policeman.

"I wouldn't trade the experience for anything," Williams told the *Star-Telegram* a month before he was elected to his first term. "It provided a good alternative, plus the opportunity to learn law enforcement with one of the biggest police forces in the world."

After yesterday's news conference, Williams acknowledged that there were problems with his discharge, but he declined to elaborate.

"There were some inaccuracies in the paperwork ... after I'd been discharged," he said.

Williams said he went through military channels and the Veterans Administration, which corrected his birth date on documents, before receiving his discharge papers. The honorable discharge bears Briggs' signature and his rank, brigadier general. It is dated 1976.

Asked whether the status of his discharge was altered on appeal, Williams replied: "That's all I really want to say right now. ... This has been a long day for me."

Briggs, who said he did not remember Williams' case, said that, generally, soldiers whose discharge was upgraded to honorable probably had originally received either a general discharge or an other-than-honorable discharge.

Once a discharge was upgraded, the previous discharge was no longer public, Briggs said.

On Thursday, B.G. Burkett, an author and Vietnam veteran from Dallas, said, "It's very rare for a guy to be in deserter status and then a few weeks later get an honorable discharge."

Yesterday, Williams challenged the use of his military records, saying they are protected information, exempt from the federal Freedom of Information Act.

The records were released to the *Star-Telegram* yesterday by the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, in response to an open records request.

"The enclosures provide all of the information for Mr. Williams that is releasable under the FOIA," according to a cover memo signed by Marcia R. Haley for Clifford G. Amsler Jr., assistant director for military records.

The records show that Williams was listed as AWOL on April 2, 1976. More than 30 days later, on May 6, 1976, he was listed as "dropped from rolls (desertion)," according to the records.

Williams' rank as a "senior military policeman" in 1975 was changed to "military policeman" after he went AWOL, the records show.

Williams said he went AWOL twice in one week, including failing to show up for a cleaning detail that he was supposed to supervise in the barracks.

He said he could not remember

or was unclear about his whereabouts during the period. At one point, he said, "I was not where I was required to be or doing what I was supposed to be doing."

He pointed out that he received two honorable discharges, the one signed by Briggs and another in 1974, after his first tour of duty.

The sheriff's military career began Aug. 30, 1972, at Fort Hood, where he served with the 545th Military Police Company, 1st Cavalry Division.

Briggs, the general who signed Williams' second discharge, was a colonel stationed at Fort Monroe, Va., in 1976, when Williams left the service. He was promoted to brigadier general in November 1979. In 1980, he assumed command of the Army's Personnel and Administration Center in St. Louis, which maintains records for all past service members.

"We dealt with and adjudicated the requests for amnesty or upgrades," said Briggs, who retired in 1986 after a 29-year career.

In 1977, President Carter issued a "full, complete and unconditional pardon" to all Vietnam-era draft evaders, which influenced the Army's decisions on soldiers, Briggs said.

"There wasn't a blanket amnesty," he said. "Every case was decided on its individual merits. But under the administration in that time frame, we looked on those rather liberally four years later."

He said he had a staff of high-level officers and military lawyers who reviewed each case and made a recommendation to him.

"There were circumstances that came to light sometimes, like administrative errors," he said. "If a guy was improperly dropped from the rolls, it would constitute an administrative error and the JAG [Judge Advocate General] would direct us to overturn it."

But Briggs said that "didn't happen often."

Staff writer Bob Mahlburg contributed to this report.

Getting discharged from the military

Military personnel leaving active duty can be discharged under one of five categories:

Honorable - Separation from military service with honor. Indicates that the quality of the soldier's service generally met the standards of acceptable conduct and performance of duty.

General - Separation under honorable conditions. Issued to soldiers whose military records are satisfactory but reflect some significant deficiencies.

Under other than honorable - Administrative separation from the service. Issued for misconduct, fraudulent entry, homosexuality, security reasons or for the good of the service.

Dishonorable - Applied only upon conviction in a court martial.

Bad conduct - Applied only upon conviction in a court martial.

SOURCE: Department of the Army

Star-Telegram

Excerpts from Sheriff David Williams' news conference:

"I believe Governor Bush was right on target when he calls this the politics of personal destruction. ... This is 'gotcha' journalism; this is ambush journalism."

"Over 20 years ago, I made mistakes, and I learned from the mistakes."

"Then, when I was 22 years old, after almost four years in the service, I came to a crossroad in my life, spiritually and personally. I had some pressing family problems related to my first wife and our son."

(Saying he has learned from his mistakes.)

"Frankly, I see the hand of God moving."

EARNING THE PEOPLE'S TRUST DAILY

■ EDITORIALS

Sheriff's Record

Tarrant County's David Williams should be judged on his recent actions rather than those of decades ago.

Few people, be they a presidential candidate or elementary school teacher, want to be judged by one incident two decades previously. Short of a criminal act, a person's past should be viewed in context of an entire life. And how a person behaves today, in the here and now, matters most.

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams has been called upon to answer questions about irregularities in his military service records. Whatever the explanation, the more-than-23-year-old events have little to do with whether Williams is competent to remain sheriff of Tarrant County come the 2000 election.

His here-and-now actions of the past three years should be enough to convince voters that he's no longer fit for the job.

Sheriff's supporters who are crying foul about the investigation should be reminded that Williams was the one who made an issue of his stellar military service while running for office in 1992 and 1996. That makes verification of his claims fair.

Frankly, the protests arising from Williams' die-hard supporters land on the ear as a hypocritical clamor. Should a politician of a different party persuasion possess the same questionable military record, they would be screaming for a thorough airing of the facts.

If Williams had bothered to exercise a little cooperation with the county commissioners during his last term as sheriff, no one would have bothered to dig into his past.

Sheriff's officer demotion reversed

BY MAX B. BAKER
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A civil service commission yesterday reversed the demotion of a Tarrant County sheriff's officer accused of improperly using pepper spray on a jail inmate.

Sheriff's Deputy Ray Grimes, 44, will get back his lieutenant's bars and recoup lost salary in return for serving a 15-day suspension without pay, the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission ruled in a 2-1 vote.

"It's a fair decision. I'm just glad to have it all over with. I'm glad to have the reinstatement," said Grimes, a nine-year department veteran who has worked for three months in the reception area of the downtown jail.

A civil service commission reinstates a lieutenant who was disciplined for pepper spraying an inmate.

The Sheriff's Department will decide when Grimes serves his suspension and will subtract the 15 days of lost salary from the approximately \$1,900 it owes him in back pay, officials said.

Grimes was demoted after a March 27 incident in the Belknap jail downtown in which an inmate with psychiatric problems was pepper sprayed 18 minutes after he spit and threw toilet water at a jailer.

Grimes sprayed the inmate after five members of the jail's emergency response team, wearing protective gear and gas masks, entered the cell, tackled the inmate and tried to restrain him.

An assistant district attorney said he hopes the commission's decision will send a message to others working in the jail that oleoresin capsicum, commonly called OC gas, should be used only as a last resort.

Although Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams'** behavior may seem "inexplicable," that doesn't mean his political future is over, says **Jim Riddlesperger**, a political science professor at Texas Christian University.

He says the Republican Party's control of local politics is so strong that if Williams wins the March 14 primary, he'll win a third term.

Williams is counting on ardent support from a small group and the ignorance of voters participating in the primary because they want to vote for Gov. George W. Bush for president.

"He has a small core of strong supporters, and his challenge is to win in the Republican primary because if he can win the primary, he can get elected. That is the game he's playing," Riddlesperger said.

Fired jailer wants to get her job back

The woman was accused of doing favors for an inmate.

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A jailer fired in October after being accused of doing favors for an inmate plans to appeal to the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission to get her old job back.

Karen L. McLain was terminated Oct. 29 because officials said she did not inform supervisors that she knew inmate Michael Toney and twice did him a favor by calling his mother. Her conduct violated civil service rules, sheriff's officials said.

McLain's commission hearing is expected to begin Jan. 12.

Toney, 33, was sentenced to death in May for killing three members of a Lake Worth family on Thanksgiving Day 1985 with a suitcase bomb. Another relative was severely burned.

Toney is in the state prison system in Huntsville. His conviction is unrelated to McLain's firing.

McLain, 33, declined to discuss the specifics of her case. But she said she was a clerk at the Belknap jail — where Toney was confined in 1998 — but had been a jailer in the Corrections Center for a year before she was fired.

In a Sept. 27 statement to sheriff's investigators, McLain wrote: "I never let a supervisor know I was acquainted with inmate Michael Toney. I didn't want to lose my job."

In a subsequent letter dated Oct. 22, McLain said that Toney was a casual acquaintance she met at rodeo events and that she doesn't know how he obtained personal information about her.

"The only favor I ever did for inmate Toney was to call his mother and inquire about her health," she said. "I did this because inmate Toney convinced me that he was worried about her health and he could not contact her because she had a block on her telephone.

"At the time I did not think that I was in serious violation of department rules. I have since come to the conclusion

[it] ... was a serious mistake."

The Internal Affairs Division of the Sheriff's Department began investigating McLain in August, after her name, favorite color and child's name were discovered on the back of a letter Toney sent to another inmate, Assistant District Attorney Steve Sparks said.

McLain's attorney, Kyle Knapp, said McLain never saw Toney face to face in the jail because she worked as a clerk.

The department's civil service rules say that except for official Sheriff's Department duties or by written permission, no employee shall knowingly associate with inmates.

McLain said in her statement that in August 1998, while assigned to Belknap, Toney would call her on a buzzer and inquire about his mother and rodeo friends.

McLain said in one statement that she called his mother twice, using her cell phone to avoid having the call traced.

The call violated department rules, said Assistant District Attorney David Hudson, another attorney representing the

"There is one specific rule [that] you're not supposed to do favors for inmates. Once you get personally entangled doing things for inmates on the outside world ... [it] creates a security issue in the jail."

— David Hudson
Assistant District Attorney

Sheriff's Department.

Toney "was communicating with his mother through this jailer," Hudson said. "There is one specific rule [that] you're not supposed to do favors for inmates. Once you get personally entangled doing things for inmates on the outside world ... [it] creates a security issue in the jail.

"The Sheriff's Department has zero tolerance on this."

Karen Rouse (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

Wednesday, December 29, 1999

Role models

As a previous 20-plus-year resident of Fort Worth and retired law enforcement person, the latest news of Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams' past is all the more disturbing.

As members of the "older" generation, we lament the misdeeds of the younger generation. We wonder why the kids today have no respect for authority or even human life.

We only have to look at the role models. We have a president who lies, not only to his family but to the world; a president whose behavior is a public disgrace but is generally dismissed; a president who is a draft dodger.

Now we have a sheriff who is a deserter. What are we telling the younger generation?

Not a day goes by that any newspaper in the country doesn't carry stories of public officials and law enforcement officers being charged with breaking the laws they have sworn to uphold. We have football, basketball and baseball players, whom the kids idolize, committing every unlawful act — murder, burglary, drug use, and the list goes on.

These are the role models. Is it any wonder that we have Columbine High and all the other school tragedies?

The problem does not lie so much with the youth — they are just following what we have taught them: *It's all right if you don't get caught.*

It is time that we wake up and start being accountable for our actions, public and private.

Richard Jones
Breaux Bridge, La.

It's not an issue

This excuse-for-a-newspaper has spent the last seven years gushing over an acknowledged draft-dodging Democrat and what he's *supposedly* done in the time he's occupied the Oval Office.

Yet you do your best to ruin the reputation of a Republican who did actually

serve in the military — all this while you *claim* to be objective and impartial in your news coverage. Tell me, are you people that desperate for news stories in Tarrant County, or are you just a bunch of bald-faced liars when it comes to objectivity?

Sheriff David Williams' military record is not an issue. It never has been and never will be, despite the claims of the Tarrant County Democrats to whom you play the lap dog. Go find something else to cover!

Steve Crager
Forney

Williams files for 3rd term as sheriff

Five other candidates are also seeking position

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Less than two weeks after being besieged by questions about his military record, Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams filed yesterday to run for re-election to a third term in office.

In securing a spot on the March 14 Republican primary ballot, Williams, 45, enters a crowded field. Four other Republicans and a Democrat have launched campaigns to become the county's next top cop. Monday is the deadline to file for the primaries. The general election will be held Nov. 7.

Williams, a Watauga resident, will not talk about his re-election campaign until after Tuesday, a secretary said. Aides said Williams is preparing the 1,400-member Sheriff's Department for any Y2K problems.

Unlike his challengers, Williams has accepted only one of several invitations to political forums. He also appeared at a Nov. 20 straw vote at The Ballpark in Arlington, which he won.

Williams' tenure, which began in

(More on SHERIFF on Page 4B)

**CAMPAIGN
2000**

Texas
Primaries



Sheriff David Williams says having been listed as an Army deserter won't cost him re-election.

1992, has been marked repeatedly by turmoil and once by tragedy.

The exact cause has still not been determined for a Sept. 17, 1997, helicopter crash that killed two of Williams' deputies, T.J. Smith and Lt. Maurice Hendrix. The department's helicopter program, which was started by Williams, was dismantled after the accident.

In the past year, Williams has argued with members of the Tarrant County Commissioner's Court about his department's multimillion-dollar budget and his initial refusal to turn in certain patrol vehicles — including his own. The rift has turned some of his most ardent supporters into outspoken critics, including Pct. 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson.

This month, it was learned that Williams' military records show that he was first listed as absent without leave, and then as a deserter, while serving as an Army police officer in the spring of 1976. He nevertheless received an honorable discharge.

In campaign literature and appearances, Williams had repeatedly touted his work as a military police officer without mentioning being AWOL or labeled a deserter.

In a recent press conference, he said "family problems" caused him to leave base without permission, and that it was "an aberration in judgment ...

that I will always regret."

Williams also said he did not believe the flap over his military record will hurt his chances for re-election. "I'm not going to lose over this," he said.

Asked at the press conference whether dirty politics was behind the recent disclosures, the sheriff said: "I think, unfortunately, it is."

Carol Hensley, administrative secretary for the Tarrant County Republican party, said Williams was in a good mood when he formally entered the race about 3:30 p.m. yesterday. He talked mostly about Y2K preparations, Hensley said.

"That is where his focus is right now, as it should be," said Capt. Herb Chambers, a department spokesman.

As part of the department's heightened alert for New Year's, "all personnel" will begin 12-hour shifts, starting at 6 a.m. today, Chambers said.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2000

AROUND TARRANT COUNTY

A LEGEND IN HIS OWN MIND —

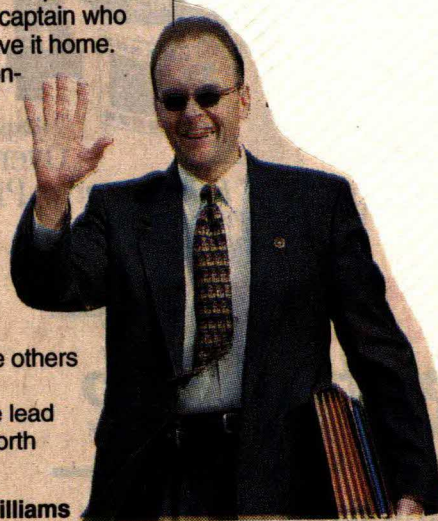
The crime rate slowed again across most of Tarrant County. Guess who took the credit?

During the 1990s, city police enforcement has slowed violent crime by as much as 90 percent in some Fort Worth neighborhoods. Sheriff David Williams, primarily the county jail executive, said he did it all — thus also creating the strong economy.

In other delusions, Williams:

- Sued for a bigger budget — essentially demanding the power to levy taxes himself.
- Stashed 15 county cars to prevent their recall for other departments. One came back in pieces — wrecked by a sheriff's captain who wasn't supposed to drive it home.
- Spent prisoners' money, previously used for jail toothpaste and soap, to hire paid evangelists.
- Used prisoners to remodel a jail office, breaking state rules.
- Ignored budget discipline from county commissioners, reassigning jail deputies to pet projects while others worked triple overtime.
- Cut in front to seize the lead role in the downtown Fort Worth holiday parade.

Sheriff David Williams



the
INSIDER
report

■
Add one more to the list of controversies involving Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams**.

The Texas Ethics Commission has agreed to review a complaint from a sheriff's employee and campaign opponent that Williams used taxpayer-paid photocopiers, employees and paper to copy a campaign speech to distribute it to hundreds of employees.

"It's against the law to use county-owned equipment for your personal gain," said **Darrell Clements** of Hurst, a jail lieutenant and Democratic candidate for sheriff who filed the complaint.

■ **LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR**

Privacy for veterans

As an American veteran, I am disturbed very much by something that has occurred recently in Tarrant County. The rather unpopular sheriff recently had his military record from more than 20 years ago opened by non-relatives and then publicized without his permission.

Although I do not support this man politically, nor am I a registered voter in his county, it sickens me to learn that I signed away my right to privacy when I swore an oath to defend my country and its Constitution.

Military service personnel are often placed under very stressful situations, sometimes for months at a time, without so much as a day of rest. This sort of long-term stress has led some to actions that they would not commit under "normal" civilian conditions.

Yet the civilian community retains the right to open veterans' records and publicly criticize them for their actions. Is this fair treatment for those who risked their lives and youth defending our freedom?

Although I would gladly share my military record with anyone who asked, I would appreciate the courtesy of being able to decide with whom I wish to share it.

We should all call on our elected officials to enact a "Veteran's Privacy Act" that would prevent the viewing or publication of service members' records without their written permission.

Gary D. Cook
Trophy Club

OBITUARIES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2000

Cavett Eugene Gilreath



FORT WORTH — Cavett Eugene Gilreath, 65, a deputy sheriff, died Thursday, Dec. 30, 1999, at home.

Funeral: 10 a.m. Monday at Brown, Owens & Brumley Funeral Home in Fort Worth. Burial: Laurel Land Memorial Park. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home.

Cavett Gilreath was born Aug. 26, 1934, in Fort Worth.

He was preceded in death by his Father, Deedie Gilreath; mother, Sadie Gilreath; and his son, Monty Gilreath.

Survivors: Wife, Gertude Gilreath; daughter and son-in-law, Marjorie and Brad Mitchell of Fort Worth; daughter, Rosalyn Morelock of North Richland Hills; sister, Lena Wilson of Fort Worth; and grandchildren, Justin Mitchell, Bobby Pierce and Christine Mandl.

Brown, Owens & Brumley
425 S. Henderson St., 335-4557

2 more enter sheriff's race on last day to file

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.
AND JOHN MORITZ
Star-Telegram Staff Writers

The game of politics intensified yesterday, with the player roster complete and the rhetoric already beginning en route to the March 14 primaries.

On the last day to file for the Republican and Democratic primaries, an eighth and ninth candidate entered the closely watched race for Tarrant County sheriff, fast becoming

the hottest political fight on the local front.

Meanwhile, Tom Davis, the chairman of the Republican Party in Tarrant County, vacated that position yesterday to run for county tax assessor-collector. Davis is one of four Republicans and one Democrat who hope to replace four-term tax collector June Garrison, who is not seeking re-election.

(More on FILING on Page 5B)

**CAMPAIGN
2000**

Texas
Primaries

► Developments
on the national
scene. 4A

Six Republicans and two Democrats are trying to unseat Sheriff David Williams, a two-term Republican whose tenure has been marked by controversy, the most recent involving his record as a military police officer during the mid-1970s.

If the sheriff survives the crowded GOP primary field, he will face stiff competition from a Democrat, pledged Art Brender, chairman of the Democratic Party in Tarrant County.

Some Republican officeholders have become arrogant, Brender said, "and the chief architect of that arrogance is David Williams."

But Williams said last night he will not be deterred by what he called gutter politics.

"I intend to wage a vigorous campaign," he said, acknowledging that he does not yet have the financial support he has enjoyed in past races.

The sheriff said he is not afraid of losing, but "I intend to win."

Whether he wins or loses, Williams said, "I'm going to be seeking God's direction."

In another race, Mark Greene, a contractor from Benbrook, filed for the Democratic nomination for the 12th District congressional seat held by Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth.

Granger, the former Fort Worth mayor, was elected to Congress in 1996.

Although Democrats may be eyeing the sheriff's race and mounting a challenge against Granger, they did not appear to be moving strongly against the Republican Party's dominance in many other offices.

Charles Gandy, a former state representative from Mesquite, and three political unknowns filed yesterday as Democrats for the right to challenge Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Gandy said he is not awed by Hutchison's war chest of more than \$6 million.

"I see that as a barrier to keep her away from middle-class Texans," said Gandy, 41, an economic development consultant who lives in Austin.

Mesquite businessman Don Clark, H. Gerald Bintliff of Leonard and Bobby Wightman-Cervantes of Dallas also filed as Democrats in the race for Hutchison's seat, joining perennial candidate Gene Kelly, who filed last month.

Kelly, a San Antonio lawyer, has waged six previous unsuccessful campaigns for state offices.

State GOP Chairwoman Susan Weddington said yesterday the Democrats' inability to field a statewide slate was surprising. Weddington discounted the notion that the Democrats, who have not won a statewide race in Texas since 1994, are keeping their powder dry this year so they can rebound in 2002.

"You don't build your party by not getting out there and running in statewide races," she said.

In the Republican primary race for the tax assessor-collector nomination, Davis will face Ernie Richardson, a property tax administrator with an Arlington law firm; Jeff Hodges, who works in the county tax office; and Betsy Price, who owns and operates an automobile title service company.

Davis' decision to run has caused a dispute in the GOP, with some saying he should have resigned as party boss weeks ago after announcing his intention to run, and others contending that he did nothing wrong by waiting until the last minute.

Despite that internal rift, local Republicans — at least in their sheer number of announced can-

didates — appeared to continue their dominance over the Democrats.

Since filing began Dec. 3, 52 Republicans and 14 Democrats have entered Tarrant County races.

Only three Democratic candidates are seeking countywide offices: police officers Shane Harrison and Luther Perry, who are vying to be their party's nominee for sheriff; and Dianne Roffey, an employee with the Tarrant Appraisal District, who wants to be tax assessor-collector.

On the Republican side, Jim Hunter, a private investigator and former federal drug enforcement agent, and John Lewis, a window washer and former sheriff's clerk, entered the race yesterday.

Other Republicans running against Williams are Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson, former Texas Ranger Dave Dunaway, Fort Worth police officer Brad Patterson and former North

Richland Hills Police Chief Jerry McGlasson.

Despite Democratic hopes to produce a few viable candidates for the 17 judicial races in the county this year, none came forward before yesterday's deadline. Unless an independent or third-party candidate pulls off a political miracle, Republicans are guaranteed to fill all 33 district judgeships and seven appellate court seats in the county for the next two years.

However, Davis said the GOP should not become overconfident in other races.

"The Republican Party and the Republican candidates don't take anything for granted," he said.

Russell Langley, executive director of the county's Democratic Party, promised that Democrats will "work harder and smarter" to regain some county offices.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2000

Leave the sheriff alone

It is truly unfortunate that busy and honorable public servants, such as Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, are distracted from what they were elected to do because of political nonsense.

Accountability is very important; however, self-serving political attacks are destructive, and all of us end up paying the price. I hope the mudslingers have to get a real job like the rest of us.

Stan Hare
Richland Hills

Court order temporarily bars sheriff from filling a position

BY KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Sheriff David Williams has been temporarily barred from filling a captain's position under a court order obtained by a sheriff's lieutenant who says he is entitled to the job.



Williams

State District Judge Bob McCoy granted Lt. John Smedley's request for a temporary restraining order Dec. 28. The order bars Williams from filling the position pending a hearing.

Smedley is seeking a permanent injunction that would prevent Williams from placing anyone but Smedley in the slot, which became open when Capt. Pat Byrnes retired last month, Smedley's attorney, Jim Minter, said.

McCoy scheduled a hearing for 8:30 a.m. Monday, but Minter said it is expected to be postponed because of scheduling conflicts.

Smedley could not be reached to comment yesterday. Minter estimated that Smedley has been employed with the department for 15 years.

Sheriff's spokesman Capt.

Herb Chambers said the department cannot comment on ongoing litigation. Assistant District Attorney Larry Thompson, who will represent the sheriff at the hearing, said only that the case will be contested.

Smedley was demoted from major to sergeant in October 1998 after county officials eliminated one of two major positions. He was among several Sheriff's Department employees to be demoted in lieu of layoffs.

A captain is one level above a lieutenant, and a sergeant falls one step below a lieutenant. A major ranks above all three, but all major's positions have been eliminated from the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, Chambers said.

Smedley said that his demotion was the result of retaliation and discrimination based on his friendship with Minter, a former foe of the sheriff's.

Williams fired Minter, a former acting Tarrant County sheriff, shortly after taking office in 1993. Minter ran against Williams for sheriff in 1996.

Smedley said that deputies with less seniority maintained higher ranks, but that he was demoted.

Smedley appealed his demotion to the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission, which ruled in June that Williams acted within his authority when he demoted Smedley. The commission then ordered the sheriff to place Smedley in a lieutenant's position.

Smedley sued Williams a month later seeking to be reinstated to his former rank and salary, and for a legal finding that he was a victim of discrimination and retaliation. He also sought back pay, monetary damages and attorneys fees.

Minter said department rules require that a deputy who is demoted or reduced in rank without cause be placed on a reinstatement list, and promoted when a slot opens.

Minter said Smedley lost two promotion opportunities — one to a major's slot and one to a captain. In the case of the major, Minter said county officials eliminated the position because Williams left it vacant for six months.

"My client doesn't want the same thing to happen this time as last time," Minter said.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 2000

Who's doing the ruining?

In response to Steve Crager's Dec. 29 accusation that the *Star-Telegram* has tried to ruin the reputation of Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, I would just like to say that it may not be important in Forney, but in Tarrant County we are especially vigilant when it comes to the character of individuals who hold public office.

As for ruining Williams' reputation, the *Star-Telegram* hasn't needed any assistance — Williams has done a pretty good job of blemishing it himself.

Floyd F. Clark
Fort Worth

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 2000

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Why it's an issue

It is true that David Williams' actions in the military 23 years ago do not necessarily have any impact on his job or qualifications as Tarrant County sheriff today. However, Williams must understand that the controversy about his military service most likely would not be an issue had he not behaved like a tyrant or dictator, unaccountable to anyone, during the past seven years.

Subsequently, to me at least, this latest controversy is simply icing on the cake. It says, unequivocally, that Williams must be overwhelmingly defeated.

Scott Wheeler
Arlington

the
INSIDER
report

A wartime Y2K scenario for Tarrant?

In the midst of Y2K fever as thousands of Americans hurried to buy bottled water and food, some Tarrant County employees say Sheriff **David Williams** warned in a meeting that the new year could get "worse than World War II."

When first asked if he heard the sheriff make such a remark, Sheriff's Department Capt. **Herb Chambers** answered: "Yes, I sure did. That was the worst-case scenario we have to train for."

But a short while later, the sheriff's spokesman said that was "not what I intended to say" and that "we didn't have a worst-case scenario."

Chambers said he can't remember who made the World War II comment but that it was made "more in jest" and caused a lot of laughs. However, Chambers later said: "I lost relatives in that war, and it's not funny."

Chambers said he heard such a comment at a Y2K meeting but thinks it was another sheriff's official who said it.

"I don't think the sheriff said that," Chambers said.



SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2000

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

Dump county posts

I call upon June Garrison to reconsider and run for Tarrant County tax assessor with the idea of doing away with this position. I call upon Howard Green to assist Garrison with what steps to take, as he did in doing away with the county treasurer post years ago.

In fact, we do not need the title and position of sheriff. Let's have the commissioners appoint an administrator answering to them.

In fact, we do not need two of the county commissioners we have now. The road mileage they have in their districts does not justify the salary and cost of the equipment they have. The states and surrounding cities can maintain the highways and roads within the county.

These are not the horse-and-buggy days. Maybe 60 years ago, all this was needed. Time and computers have changed things.

The "country club" at the end of Main Street in Fort Worth is costing the taxpayers too much. They have been in office for too long. Remember election day!

Clayton Sebastian
Fort Worth

Ex-wife tells of time sheriff went AWOL

Williams visited her and their son to try for a reconciliation, she says.

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — The former wife of Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams said last night that Williams was with her in 1976 when he was absent without leave from the Army.

Rhonda Strom said Williams, at the time a military policeman stationed in Oklahoma, showed up at her parents' door in O'Fallon, Ill., in April 1976, pleading

for a reconciliation.

"He came to visit me and our son. He wanted to get back together," Strom, who still lives in O'Fallon, said in a telephone interview.

"At the time, I didn't know he was AWOL," she said.

While the Army was searching for Williams in Oklahoma, eventually labeling him as a deserter, he was in Illinois attempting to resurrect a marriage that lasted less than a year, Strom said.

She said she does not remember exactly how long Williams stayed in O'Fallon, but that it was long enough for them to

(More on SHERIFF on Page 11A)

meet repeatedly, often to discuss the possibilities of getting remarried.

In the end, Strom said, she decided not to return to Oklahoma with Williams "because of his excessive drinking."

"I didn't want my son around that. I couldn't deal with it," she said.

Reached last night at his home, Williams said he has never heard his former wife blame his past drinking for their breakup. But, he added, "It's not an unreasonable observation or comment on her part."

Williams said he stopped drinking in 1987.

Military records have shown that Williams was listed as AWOL from Fort Sill, Okla., on April 2, 1976, and was labeled a deserter on May 6, 1976. In a news conference last month, Williams would only say that personal family problems motivated him to leave without permission from his duties as a senior military policeman.

He described his actions as an "aberration of judgment."

Williams said last night he tried for three months to get an approved leave from Fort Sill before leaving without permission to go to O'Fallon. "The purpose was to reach a reconciliation with Rhonda," he said.

Strom said she thought Williams was simply on regular leave from Fort Sill when he came to see her. "I never asked because it never occurred to me that he would be AWOL," she said.

He did not appear concerned about getting back to the military, she said.

"I think the only thing he worried about was the bottle of alcohol that he carried with him," she said.

Since their divorce in 1974,

however, Strom said she and Williams have remained close friends. She said he has been very supportive of their son, Ryan, now 25, who suffered serious, debilitating injuries from a car accident in 1992, two months before Williams won his first term as the Tarrant County sheriff.

Strom said she strongly supports Williams, who is currently in a tight race for re-election, and does not believe his past should hurt him politically. Local residents, she said, "are very lucky to have him."

Strom said she and Williams met on a blind date in 1973, while both were stationed at Fort Hood, near Killeen, he in the Army and she in the Women's Army Corps. They married the following November.

She said she was pregnant with their son when she decided to leave Williams, who was still stationed at Fort Hood, after less than a year of marriage.

It surprised her when he reappeared in 1976, Strom said. "He went to my parents' house and stayed with them. He knew they wouldn't turn him away because he's Ryan's father," she said.

But, Strom added, "If my father had known he was AWOL, he wouldn't have let David in, because my father's retired from the military."

She said she and Williams went out together with their son several times during that period. At other times, Strom said, "he and I would find times alone to talk."

She said that near the end of her ex-husband's stay, he told her: "I hope my drinking doesn't come between us."

"And it did."

OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2000

Scrutinizing the sheriff

I don't care what happens to Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams one way or the other, but I must draw one of two conclusions from Stan Hare's Jan. 4 letter: Either Hare is a political supporter of Williams, or he is seriously uninformed.

Having been in law enforcement for 15-plus years, I have more than an inkling of what goes on in the law enforcement/political arena. The problem with Williams' tenure is that he is accountable for what goes on in this department, and he is either turning a blind eye to what is going on or he is in cahoots. Ultimately, he is still accountable to the county commissioners.

We elected these officials to oversee the business of the county, which includes the Sheriff's Department. I can guarantee that some of the stunts that Williams has pulled since he has taken office would not be tolerated by a privately run company.

The escapades with the vehicles, appointing a "personal adviser," trying to turn the jail into a church — need I go on? I think that picking on Williams is justified, and we should check qualifications and choose our next sheriff carefully. Williams leaves a lot to be desired, and his actions should be scrutinized.

Michael D. Hodges
Benbrook

Ex-jailer won't be rehired, panel says

Security was breached,
administrator testifies

By KAREN ROUSE
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A former jailer who was fired after she admitted doing favors for an inmate will not get her job back, the Sheriff's Civil Service Commission ruled yesterday.

After a hearing that took less than two hours, commissioners Bob Hampton, Pat Dohoney and Chairman Richard De Otte voted unanimously to uphold the Oct. 29 firing of Karen L. McLain.

McLain, who admitted to twice calling the mother of an inmate as a favor to him, expressed frustration after the vote, and said she didn't believe that an internal affairs investigation into her case was thorough.

McLain, 33, said she is unemployed and that the decision ended any chance of reviving her law enforcement career. "I have no earthly idea what I'm going to do," she said.

McLain testified that she was a clerk at the Belknap jail for a few weeks during the summer of 1998 when she used her cell phone to check on the health of the mother of inmate Michael Toney. She later became a jailer in the Corrections Center during her last year with the department.

McLain said she knew Toney from past rodeo events, but did not tell her supervisors because she feared losing her job and because she didn't think their relationship was of any significance.

Her actions, however, breached jail security and damaged the integrity of the department and its officers, Sheriff's Capt. Savala Swanson, the jail administrator, testified yesterday.

FIRING UPHELD



Karen L. McLain, a jailer who was fired Oct. 29 for doing favors for an inmate, will not get her job back, a civil service commission rules.

Sheriff's officials said McLain's behavior violated civil service rules, which prohibit employees from associating with inmates, except for official Sheriff's Department duties or by written permission.

McLain came under investigation in August after personal information, including her name, favorite color, hair and eye colors and daughter's name, were found on a letter that Toney sent to another inmate.

After the department's Internal Affairs Division investigated, McLain admitted in statements that she made the calls and deliberately did not disclose that she knew Toney.

McLain said yesterday that she had not read her employee manual. She said it was common for jailers to do favors for inmates, such as giving them an extra sandwich or cigarette breaks.

She said she made the calls because she was naive. McLain, who said she communicated with Toney only through an emergency intercom system, reported to him that his mother was not ill.

Swanson said Toney could have used chaplain services to check on his mother if he was concerned.

Toney has since been convicted of capital murder in the bombing deaths of three people, and is on Death Row.

Karen Rouse, (817) 390-7620
karenrouse@star-telegram.com

The influence of the Fort Worth police chief went far beyond his department.

Thomas Windham was always the first to downplay his individual role in Fort Worth's dramatic drop in crime during his 15-year tenure as chief of police.

"There's a lot of things that came into play," Windham said in March at a Washington news conference highlighting Fort Worth's anti-crime efforts. "It's not just the policing efforts."

True, it wasn't just the policing. Fort Worth's success in decreasing crime rates was a result of a communitywide effort. But without the leadership provided by Windham, it's doubtful that the community would have been as enthusiastic as it was about efforts like Code:Blue and Citizens on Patrol.

Windham died yesterday after a short but vigorous battle to beat the cancerous tumor that had invaded his body. He was 61.

Syndicated columnist David Broder captured Windham's personality after a brief meeting with the chief in March. Windham was in Washington, representing Fort Worth at the National Crime Prevention Council meeting that profiled six U.S. cities as stellar examples of innovation in crime fighting.

"No one could ever accuse Thomas R. Windham, the police chief of Fort Worth, of being soft on crime," Broder wrote. "A 35-year veteran of the police forces of Los Angeles and Fort Worth, he has an approach to law enforcement as unbending as his posture."

Perhaps the only time that Windham could be accused of bending over backward was when it came to his grandchildren.

When Windham became chief in 1985, Fort Worth was No. 1 in the nation in its per capita crime rate. Between 1986 and 1996, the violent crime rate in Cowtown dropped 48 percent and the total crime rate 56 percent. One key was Code:Blue, a program that divided the city into 12

neighborhoods, set up community boards to work with the police in each area, and trained thousands of volunteers to supplement the police on community patrols.

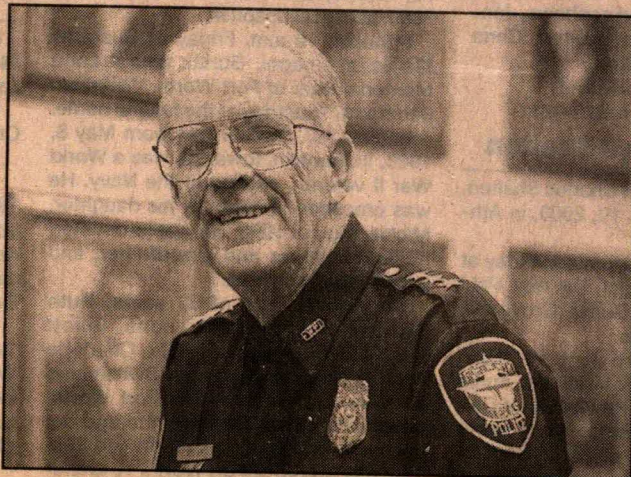
Successes with community policing spread to other departments in the Metroplex, many of which patterned their programs after Fort Worth's.

But Windham's influence went beyond North Texas. The Justice Department cited his department for progressive programs, which was one of the reasons why Fort Worth was tagged one of the first U.S. cities to receive federal funds to initiate the Weed & Seed program.

Rep. Kay Granger once called Windham a shrewd politician. Not totally enamored of the California transplant during his early days as chief, Granger learned to appreciate his political savvy, particularly during the effort to get the voters to pass a half-cent sales tax designated for crime programs.

The chief was not universally beloved by the rank and file, but then, few police chiefs can make that claim. He was a tough boss, administering swift justice for those who broke rules. Sometimes too swift, some officers would say. But he also was a dogged public defender of his officers when their actions brought scrutiny of the department.

The city's prayers go out to the family and friends of this decent, good man who worked tirelessly for 15 years to make Fort Worth a better, safer city.



Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham

Star-Telegram

Thomas Windham

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2000

EDITORIALS

Windham endorsed Perry, family says

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Before he died, Fort Worth Police Chief Thomas Windham wrote a letter supporting his assistant's campaign to become the next sheriff in Tarrant County, Windham's family has said.

Maria Windham said her husband put in writing his support for Luther Perry, a 24-year veteran Fort Worth policeman and longtime assistant to the chief.

Perry, in response to questions yesterday, said he has been told of the letter but has not read it.

"There is a letter of endorsement," he said. "It's already in the hands of somebody who's going to send it out, but only at the appropriate time."

Windham, 61, died Wednesday of cancer.

Perry and Shane Harrison are competing for the Democratic nomination for sheriff.

There are seven Republican candidates, including Sheriff David Williams. A Reform Party candidate is also seeking the position.

Primaries are scheduled for March 14, and the general election is Nov. 7.

Yesterday, Perry said at the Windham family home that it was not the right place or time to respond to questions about the sheriff's race or the letter.

"It's not that politically important to me to come forth with it right now," he said.

Perry added, however, that he was moved by knowing that Windham, while "in the face of death," continued to be concerned about good policing and believed he was the best candidate for sheriff.

"This has affected me just like I was his son," he said of Windham's death.

Perry's father, Luther Perry Sr., died Oct. 8, a day after arriving in Fort Worth from his home in St. Louis to help open his son's campaign headquarters.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700
jld@star-telegram.com

FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2000

Corrections and Clarifications

■ Savala Swanson is chief deputy of confinement in the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department. His title was incorrect in an article yesterday.

Thomas Ray Windham



FORT WORTH — Thomas Ray Windham, 61, Fort Worth Police Chief for the last 15 years, went to be in the presence of the Lord on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2000, in Fort Worth in the first month of the millennium.

Celebration of Life: 2 p.m. Tuesday at the sanctuary of First United Methodist Church, 800 W. Fifth St., Fort Worth. Officiant and eulogist: Dr. Kenneth Wayne Day, senior pastor. Eulogist amenities will be given by Congresswomen Kay Granger and the Rev. W.G. Daniels. Music will be provided by the Fort Worth Police Choir. Burial: Greenwood Memorial Park, where a horse drawn carriage will carry the coffin from the bronze horses of Saint Marks to the grave. Visitation: 6 to 9 p.m. Monday in the Independence Chapel at Greenwood Mausoleum. Bearers of bier will be the Fort Worth Police Honor Guard.

Thomas Ray Windham was born on June 29, 1938, in Jonesboro.

A marvelous life began on June 29, 1938, in Jonesboro, Hamilton County, Texas, when Henry Thomas and Edna Merle Humes Windham gave birth to two boys, twins, Thomas Ray and Allen Roy Windham. Two babies that would bond as two boys and all through life sharing the friendship of brotherhood in that small central Texas town. Thomas grew up and matriculated in the Hamilton public schools and graduated from Hamilton High School. It was at the age of 13 that Tom accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior and was baptized in the Leon River as a part of the Olin Baptist Church. From 1959 until his death, he spent a lifetime in public service.

When I have done the things
that God has placed me here to do
and then He calls me home
satisfied that my work in through
I hope that people will say
that I lived a life complete
then my soul can be at rest
knowing that I met my God in peace.

Gregory W. Spencer - Copyright

Survivors: He leaves with sweet memories a loving and devoted wife of 35 years, Maria Klein Windham of Fort Worth; daughters, Johanna Johnson and her husband, Jimmy, of Fort Worth and Kathleen Dower and her husband, Nathan, of Richardson; brothers, his twin, Allen Roy Windham and his wife, Susie, of Purcellville, Va., and Jerry Windham and his wife, Pat, of College Station; sister, Gail Windham of San Pedro, Calif.; grandchildren, Darryl Nuncio of Richardson, Michael Eurlon and Katie Johnson, both of Fort Worth; and many nephews, nieces, great-nephews and great-nieces.

Greenwood Funeral Home
3100 White Settlement Road, 336-0584



