



■ **ETTA HULME**



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



# Firm to get 1-year jail deal

## Aramark to furnish faith, commissary services

By BECHETTA JACKSON  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — A one-year renewable contract that merges the Tarrant County Jail's religious and commissary services will be awarded to Aramark Correctional Services — a company with ties to local jail minister Hugh Atwell.

County commissioners had been concerned that Sheriff David Williams, who announced the contract yesterday, would bind his successor to a five-

year deal. Williams, who unsuccessfully sought a third term, will leave office Dec. 31.

In a two-page statement, Williams said the contract should give the county's next sheriff peace of mind.

"Concerns over a future sheriff's hands being tied are no longer valid," Williams said. The contract, which hasn't been signed, would take effect June 1.

County Judge Tom Vandergriff said the one-

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year term is more reasonable than the five-year contract.

Still, commissioners remain skeptical about the agreement that teams Aramark, a national food service provider, with Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy, a nonprofit jail ministry Atwell created.

"We want to talk to our legal counsel and determine just what might be actions that we could consider," Vandergriff said. "It concerns me that, here in the twilight of his tenure, he is taking an action that probably should be left to the new sheriff."

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said, "What gives me indigestion is that this contract has four one-year options for renewal."

Johnson said he wants to examine the contract and discuss

it with the attorney the court hired last month to possibly challenge the contract.

A panel of law enforcement personnel selected Aramark's proposal from six responses, Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester said. Because three of the responses included no bids and one was a nonqualifying bid, only Aramark and Swanson Services Corp. submitted valid proposals, he said.

The board's evaluation process started last week and ended Tuesday night, Hester said.

Under the new contract, the inmate trust fund will receive \$3 per inmate, \$1 more than the present contract provides. It will also provide a benevolence fund for employees, counseling for employees and their families, and ethics and character classes for employees.

"It provides, through nontaxpayer money, a host of services for the inmates and their fami-

lies," Hester said. "This has been issued in good faith, and it makes good business sense."

The expiring one-year contract between the Sheriff's Department and Atwell gave Faith Restorative more than \$327,000 in commissary money to run a jail ministry program. Commissioners criticized the arrangement after learning that part of the money is used to rent a \$770-a-month downtown apartment, which Atwell uses as an office.

Atwell could not be reached to comment yesterday.

Debbie Albert, an Aramark spokeswoman, declined to discuss the contract.

"I can tell you that we replied to the bid," Albert said from Aramark's headquarters in Philadelphia. "We met the bid specifications, and we were selected to run the commissary services."

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Star-Telegram Archives

**Sheriff David Williams** says the pact won't tie the hands of his successor.



# Jail ritual reported as security breach

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Two chaplains breached security when they took an inmate to an isolated area of the Tarrant County Jail and began commanding Satan to “leave this man’s body” in an exorcismlike ritual, according to sheriff’s documents obtained yesterday by the *Star-Telegram*.

Sunday in the county jail’s Green Bay unit, near Interstate 35W and Loop 820. Hearing the commotion, described as “loud and disruptive,” guards rushed to the scene, at first believing that the “inmate was assaulting the chaplains,” according to witness statements and interoffice memos filed with the Tarrant County Sheriff’s Department as part of an internal investigation.

What the guards found instead was the inmate sitting upright on a table. A volunteer chaplain, identified in the reports only as Ramirez, had his hand on the prisoner’s forehead, according to the reports.

The jail preacher was “praying very loudly, stating for Satan to get out of [the] inmate’s head and heart,” wrote one witness, identified as sheriff’s officer Curtis Hickey.

“He shouted this several times, then started speaking a language that was unknown to me,” Hickey wrote.

Another report said the volunteer chaplain was at times shouting in “unknown tongues.”

During the ritual, full-time jail chaplain Allen Faries — identified in the reports as “Chaplain Farris” — was holding the inmate’s hand. Faries had his head bowed, apparently in prayer, according to Hickey’s report.

The jail ministers violated safety rules by removing the inmate, who is charged with sexually assaulting a child, from his cell without notifying the shift commander, the reports show.

“I am requesting this incident be reviewed by jail command staff,” sheriff’s Capt. Dan West wrote.

The ritual began about 8:30 a.m.

(More on JAIL on Page 15A)

Lt. Gayle Gray, a shift commander at the jail’s Green Bay unit, wrote in a report that she walked in on the ceremony.

“I did not stop this performance because I am not familiar with this type of process and did not know what the moral or legal ramifications might be for interrupting such a procedure,” Gray wrote.

Afterward, however, the lieutenant confronted Faries. “I told him that what I had observed was totally unacceptable; it appeared to be an exorcism.

“He [Faries] stated that was exactly what it was,” Gray said in her report.

Faries did not return calls made yesterday to his office, his home and his pager. He is a paid chaplain with Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy, headed by Hugh Atwell, a supporter of Sheriff David Williams.

Yesterday, Williams issued a statement saying he had signed a new contract that will extend for a year Faith Restorative’s role as the official ministry of the county jail.

Neither Williams nor Atwell could be reached yesterday to comment on the incident.



# JAIL

Capt. Herb Chambers, spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, played down reports of an exorcism during interviews Monday with the *Star-Telegram*. Chambers said at that time that Faries' only role in the ceremony was to contact his supervisors after becoming "concerned about the possible

disruption" caused by the service.

The captain again denied in TV interviews Tuesday that an "exorcism" was performed at the jail.

Chambers said yesterday that his earlier statements were made before he had read the reports. He declined to comment further.

The ritual, which lasted about 30 minutes, was "disturbing and ... upset the staff and inmates in the area," West said in his report.

"The inmates ... were becoming very agitated, listening to the incident," Hickey wrote, adding: "It appeared to me to be an exorcism, which Chaplain Farris confirmed when I spoke with him after the inmate was returned to his pod."

Gray wrote that she told Faries later that it was "unacceptable to counsel an inmate ... without [the] knowledge or approval of a confinement supervisor."

"I also reminded him," she said in the report, "that we had already discussed and decided that speaking in tongues was not going to be done" in the county jail.

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**BOB RAY SANDERS**

■  
COMMENTARY

## Sheriff unfit to finish term

**B**ecause of his unabashed arrogance, total defiance of the county's governing body and shameful misuse of authority, and for being an utter embarrassment to his office, it is time for Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams to go.

Not in December, when his term is officially up.

Right now.

The sheriff ought to resign, but because that won't happen, steps

should be taken to have him removed.

Over and over, Williams has snubbed the county commissioners, has been irresponsible in executing the department's budget and has forgotten that his main duty is running jails.

In addition, he has allowed his religious beliefs to blur any administrative vision he might once have had, causing him to err continuously in

(More on SANDERS on Page 7B)

ways that are not in the best interests of the county, its taxpayers or the inmates under his control.

This week, two other disturbing events reminded us just how out of control this zealot has become.

A volunteer chaplain, with the aid of a full-time jail minister serving under a contract that Williams signed, removed a prisoner from his cell, took him to a private room and performed an exorcism on him.

Three days later, against the wishes and advice of many county officials, Williams announced that he will contract with a private company to provide commissary and religious services to the jail.

Keep in mind that Williams was defeated in the Republican primary in March.

Even though the contract is for one year (instead of an originally planned five-year contract) with Aramark Correctional Services — the jail ministry currently in place will provide the chaplaincy program in a joint venture — that is a binding agreement that extends beyond the sheriff's tenure. The new sheriff will have to live with that contract for at least six months.

That was an unforgivable act.

The fact that Williams had used \$327,000 in commissary funds — money from the sale of goods to prisoners — to help establish a private jail ministry was appalling

enough. Those funds were supposed to be used for the benefit of the inmates, such as supplying hygiene products, but the sheriff chose instead to set up his preacher friend/chaplaincy director in a \$770-a-month office, while many prisoners went without some bare necessities.

It has always been difficult to find the sheriff when you want him, especially since his defeat at the polls.

Where was he, I wonder, when jail ministers were commanding Satan to "leave this man's body"?

Just when you think Williams can do nothing more to hurt the county, impose upon the inmates or further embarrass himself, he always does something to top his last feat.

It is time for him to go.

Oh, I know it won't be easy. The state constitution doesn't make it easy.

The sheriff is one of those "certain officers" in the constitution who can be removed by state district judges for "incompetency, official misconduct, habitual drunkenness or other causes defined by law."

I understand Williams doesn't drink anymore, so we can't get him for drunkenness. And because he apparently has the authority to do many of the stupid things he did, it may be hard to convict him for official misconduct.



## Fair is Fair

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams gets summarily kicked in this space when he does something bone-headed, so he deserves recognition when he does something pragmatic.

Although it is still debatable whether Williams needed to merge the jail's commissary operations with the chaplain program, the fact that he did it with a one-year contract rather than a previously mentioned five-year one is laudable.

But there's no doubt that the man is the epitome of incompetence.

I know the voters have already decided that, which is why they voted overwhelmingly for someone else in the primary. Some of you would say that because the electorate has spoken, we should just wait until Williams' term runs out Dec. 31.

Can we really wait that long? That's nearly eight months.

Imagine how many more devilish things could happen between now and December if the man remains in office.

Oh well, I suppose we could pray for an exorcism.

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# State confirms commissioners' authority in fight with sheriff

By NEIL STRASSMAN  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — The Tarrant County Commissioners Court acted "within its authority" in its budget fight with Sheriff David Williams, Texas Attorney General John Cornyn said in an opinion yesterday.

Although the commissioners do not have the authority to tell another elected official how to deploy public resources, they can set the number of positions in a county department and have authority over county property and the purchase of county equipment, Cornyn said.

"We are pleased that we have the

authority we thought we had," County Judge Tom Vandergriff said.

The Sheriff's Department sought the opinion.

"We'll have to live with it," said Capt. Herb Chambers, a department spokesman. "We adhered to the direction of the county commissioners long before the attorney general's opinion was handed down."

Williams and commissioners clashed repeatedly over the purchase of Chevrolet Tahoes, staffing levels in the jail, and the sheriff's effort to turn the department into a broad countywide law enforcement agency.



Friday, May 5, 2000

But Cornyn's opinion says, "The commissioners court of a county may take a different view of the importance of certain functions than does an elected officer and may budget that officer less money to perform that function than he requests."

Williams took the unusual step of suing commissioners in November 1998, asking a state district court to restrict their budgetary authority. He dropped the lawsuit in February 1999 but asked the district attorney to seek the attorney general's opinion.

"The commissioners really do have broad budgetary authority, and it sounds

to me that this opinion recognizes that," Assistant District Attorney Marvin Collins said.

Williams said in the suit that commissioners did not allocate enough money for his department and interfered with his authority. Commissioners said that they were exercising their state-authorized duty to hold the Sheriff's Department fiscally accountable.

Commissioners cut Williams' 1999 budget request and reduced his staff by 36 people to force him to keep his employees in their assigned jobs. For several years, Williams manipulated jail

staffing levels, using jailers to serve warrants, investigate and work in administration, running up a huge overtime tab.

"No one elected official has the authority to spend taxpayer dollars however he wants to spend them," Commissioner Glen Whitley said. "There is an intentional check and balance on the budget, and it doesn't give the sheriff ultimate control over everything."

Staff writer Bechetta Jackson contributed to this report.

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## Exorcism and freedom

I read Jack Douglas Jr.'s Wednesday story about the "exorcism" in the Tarrant County Jail twice.

In this age of religious tolerance, we must be mindful of the spiritual beliefs and values of others, no matter how different they are from our own. There is in almost all world religions — from Roman Catholicism to Scientology, from Buddhism to African shamanism — a deeply rooted belief in demonic beings. With this is a corresponding belief that these demons can "enter" the body and cause problems. Prayer, meditation and ritual — or "exorcism" — are often seen as the solution to this situation.

From the comments of the Tarrant County jail officials, it seems that they knew nothing about the "exorcism" before it commenced and that they stopped it only because its noise posed a security risk to the other prisoners, who would have been frightened by the sounds.

What am I suggesting? Perform the "exorcism" again — but this time do it in a more controlled setting, where no other prisoners can hear it and where an outside observer can monitor it to make sure that nothing untoward occurs. Anything less would be an infringement of the religious liberties that this country was founded upon.

Just because people are incarcerated does not mean that they are without a right to religion. Indeed, they are the most in need of it, and we ought to keep this in mind.

**Daniel Martin Christianson**  
*Miami Beach*



WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2000

## Tongue-speaking in jail

In churches recognizing and walking in the gifts of God's Holy Spirit, praying in one's prayer language (in the Spirit) during the deliverance of a spiritually oppressed Christian or a demon-possessed non-Christian is not an unusual occurrence any more than the deliverance itself. Since the charismatic renewal, we now find this to be interdenominational and not just peculiar to Pentecostals.

If the recent deliverance in the Tarrant County Jail was done properly and in order, the inmate or his family requested the action and the ministers discerned the need. I'm certain that both parties would have preferred a completely private location, but that may not have been possible within this particular correctional facility.

There are many sights and sounds that startle and unsettle me: mean-spirited harassment and cursing in the loudest voices at sporting events; obscene taunts and gestures as a result of road rage; immoral and violent programs on television. But justifiably setting a captive free from behind either iron prison bars or spiritual prison bars is not one of them.

If infractions of rules occurred, handle it within the system. Don't begin brewing another tempest in a teapot, as you've done with all other activities that could be related to Sheriff David Williams.

**Glenn A. Turner**  
*Fort Worth*



# COMMENTARY

Sunday, May 14, 2000

Tarrant County sheriff's commanders have been bedeviled by their repeated denials that two jail preachers performed an exorcism service on an inmate. "Those are your words, not ours," sheriff's Capt. **Herb Chambers** responded when initially asked about a reported exorcism in the county jail's Green Bay unit on April 30.

The *Star-Telegram*, however, published a story after obtaining internal reports from the Sheriff's

Department clearly stating that two chaplains attempted to exorcise demons from an inmate charged with sexually assaulting a child.

Now the department is refusing to hand over the internal records to WFAA/Channel 8, despite a ruling by the

the  
**INSIDER**  
report

Tarrant County district attorney's office that says the documents are public information and releasable under the Open Records Act.



# Salute honors Tarrant peace officers killed on duty

**BY DEANNA BOYD**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

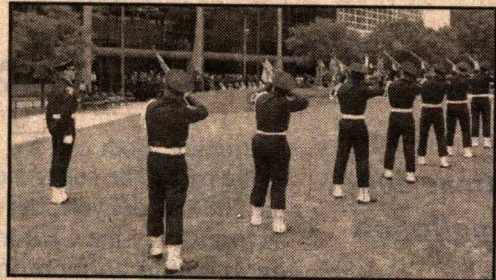
**FORT WORTH** — It is her son's hugs that she misses the most.

Maria Barreda-Alvarado smiles through tears as she recalls how her 6-foot-2 son towered over her petite 4-foot-11 frame, resting his chin upon the top of her head as he enclosed her with his strong arms.

"I think about it and I yearn for that hug," Barreda-Alvarado said.

It's been more than three years since she has felt the embrace of Richard David Barreda, a motorcycle officer with the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Department of Public Safety. Barreda was killed on Valentine's Day 1997 when he crashed into a shuttle van as he pursued a speeder.

Yesterday, Barreda-Alvarado and an estimated two dozen other survivors joined law enforcement officers from North Texas in honoring Tarrant County peace officers killed in the line of duty.



Star-Telegram/RON J. JENKINS

**Members of the Fort Worth Police Department Honor Guard fire three volleys to honor Tarrant peace officers killed on duty.**

Motorcycle officers, mounted patrol and honor guard officers from across Tarrant County paraded down Main Street from the Fort Worth Convention Center to the Tarrant County Administration building.

There, about 250 participants, including a sea of officers dressed in crisp black and blue uniforms, listened solemnly to comments by area officers and county officials, including

Fort Worth Police Chief Ralph Mendoza, Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams and County Judge Tom Vandergriff.

A bagpiper played as the names of 58 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in Tarrant County between 1913 and 1997 were called out. Seven riflemen from the Fort Worth Police Department Honor Guard pierced the windy, downtown air with the sounds of three volleys.

For Stephanie Duplantis, the ceremony was bittersweet. Duplantis lost her husband, Gary C. Hires, in 1993. Hires, a 19-year veteran of the Haltom City Police Department, was responding to a sniper call when he was fatally shot by a teen while still in his car. During the shooting rampage, police killed the shooter, 14-year-old Juan Ramon.

"I never get to the point that I'm totally over it or have total closure," said Duplantis, who has three sons by Hires. "I don't know why they use that word because I don't believe it's truthful. You always have that

scar on your heart. It's healing, but it's still there."

After the ceremony, Duplantis and a crying Barreda-Alvarado embraced.

Memorials, often followed by such comforting hugs, have become common for the women, both volunteers with the Metroplex Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS).

"It's hard, but it's also very comforting and healing for us as survivors to know they're not forgotten," Duplantis said.

Barreda-Alvarado said the memorials help her cope, reminding her that she is not alone in her pain. "If you don't get to say goodbye to your child, it's just something that haunts you everyday," Alvarado said.

Alvarado said she still answers "three" when asked how many children she has.

"You just don't ever learn to say two."

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# County sues sheriff over jail deal

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — For the second time in less than two years, Tarrant County commissioners and Sheriff David Williams are pitted against one another in a lawsuit, with the current litigation accusing the lame-duck sheriff of creating a "sweetheart contract" for a close friend.

The lawsuit, filed yesterday in state district court, claims that Williams orchestrated the contract, lumping lucrative commissary profits with a jail ministry program to "feather the nest" of Hugh Atwell, founder and director of Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy.

Williams' bid for a third term ended when he lost the March Republi-

can primary, and he will leave office at year's end. He could not be reached yesterday to comment, despite calls to his office and home.

"There is no response from the sheriff," said Capt. Herb Chambers, spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, when asked about the lawsuit.

Atwell, in a telephone interview, denied that his part of the contract resulted from an unfair advantage. "Instead of a sweetheart deal, I think this is a win-win situation for the county," he said.

The use of profits from prisoners' purchases of commissary items is "a method of funding the chaplaincy program," Atwell said. "What better way to do that than let the inmates fund it?"

Williams has repeatedly been at odds with members of the Commissioners Court for several years, often arguing about deputy salaries, the use of take-home vehicles and, most recently, the sheriff's business dealings with Atwell, a former deputy.

In February 1999, Williams dropped a lawsuit that he filed against the commissioners several months earlier, alleging that they

did not allocate his department enough money and interfered with his authority.

In the current lawsuit, commissioners have asked the court to void a one-year contract recently agreed to by Williams, Aramark Corp. Correctional Services and Atwell's ministry. Though it reportedly has not been signed, the contract is scheduled to go into effect June 1, and it includes options for renewals for four years.

Each month, the jail commissary sells an estimated \$200,000 of such items as snacks and toiletries to county inmates. Profits from the commissary, often called the "banana wagon," will be used to pay for ministering and counseling prisoners, sheriff's officials have said.

But members of the Commissioners Court, the county's governing body, say in the lawsuit that the arrangement is little more than a moneymaking venture set up for Atwell.

They called it a "transparent sham."

"Williams has set in motion a thoroughly unsound and particularly unfortunate scheme to commit Tarrant County to a contract for commissary services that is illegally tied to his crony's chaplaincy business," the lawsuit says, adding:

"While Williams' personal motivation for this scheme must remain a mystery for the time being, the whole contrivance raises the suspicion that Williams, himself, will ultimately benefit."

Debbie Albert, a spokeswoman at Aramark's corporate offices in Philadelphia, said the company will not comment on the particulars of the lawsuit.

"It sounds like an issue between the county and the sheriff, and we will just await the outcome," Albert said.

Williams earmarked more than \$327,000 to Faith Restorative in a one-year contract that expires May

31. The money came from profits from the commissary, operated by Mid-States Services, whose contract with the Sheriff's Department has expired.

Members of the Commissioners Court have said they were bothered by Atwell's refusal to explain what he has done with the money he has received so far, and they have pushed for returning the ministering of inmates to local religious leaders who volunteer their time.

The lawsuit calls the contract Williams' "last-ditch effort to continue funneling cash to Atwell and his nonprofit corporation."

In filing the lawsuit, Pct. 3 Commissioner Glen Whitley said, "We told the attorney to protect the taxpayers."

Whitley said commissioners were forced to sue after attempts to talk to Williams failed. "Unfortunately, it's still a communications problem," he said. "We have a sheriff who is refusing to communicate with anyone, and that is costing the taxpayers money."

Pct. 1 Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said the new contract's details remain a mystery to many in county government. "We needed to see the contract," Bagsby said.

Pct. 2 Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said Williams should not sign a contract that a new sheriff will have to honor.

"The Commissioners Court is committed to preserving the incoming sheriff's right to manage the jail, the commissary and the chaplaincy program as he sees as best for Tarrant County," VanRavenswaay said.

The lawsuit is the latest fight over who controls the jail's commissary operation, said Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at Texas Christian University.

"It long has been a personal, private sheikdom of sheriffs for decades," Riddlesperger said.



FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2000

# Bush grants raises for jail guards

BY JOHN MORITZ  
Star-Telegram Austin Bureau

AUSTIN — Amid a rash of inmate violence and an exodus of prison guards, Gov. George W. Bush ordered a pay boost yesterday for about 20,000 Texas correctional officers.

The cost is about \$35 million of the Texas Criminal Justice Department's annual budget of about \$1 billion, and the funds will be taken from other programs in the department. Bush issued an executive order that sets up a fourth pay grade for officers with three or more years' service after working out an agreement with Lt. Gov. Rick Perry and House Speaker Pete Laney.

The raise, up to \$1,656 per year for some guards, will take effect in July and expire Aug. 31, 2001, unless the Legislature extends it.

"Our prison guards play a vital role in a justice system that is keeping thousands of violent criminals off our streets," Bush said in the order. "I have great respect for the job guards do under difficult and often dangerous conditions."

Bush, the presumed Republican presidential nominee, has been under fire from state employee organizations to boost

prison pay to stanch a wholesale departure of prison guards.

The work force, which has an authorized strength of 25,000 to oversee 151,000 inmates, has been about 2,000 guards short for most of the year.

Bush's order calls for guards now at the highest pay scale to be paid \$28,380. Sergeants, who now earn \$28,380, would get a boost of \$965 a year, and some food and laundry service workers will see raises ranging from \$1,548 to \$1,920 a year.

Correctional officers have marched on the Capitol in Austin and held rallies in Huntsville, seeking an emergency raise.

They said they cannot wait until the Legislature convenes in January for a boost in their pay, which tops out at about \$26,000 a year.

The guards issued their outcry during a series of violent attacks by inmates, including one in December in East Texas in which a guard was killed with a makeshift knife.

In February, two Death Row inmates overpowered a female guard and held her hostage for 13 hours. This month, an inmate held two prison nurses hostage for almost an hour and stabbed an assistant warden.

The Texas Public Employees Association called the raise a "significant step."

"Our organization has consistently held that the unacceptably high attrition rates among Texas corrections personnel are due to the combination of low salaries and the lack of a meaningful career ladder for employees," said Gary Anderson, the organization's executive director.

Area Republican lawmakers involved in prison issues also applauded the action.

"Our prison guards perform a critical public service, and they do so in the harshest of conditions," said Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, a member of

the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. "I think the governor's decision was the right thing to do."

Rep. Ray Allen, R-Grand Prairie, said the action should be viewed as a first step.

"It's my belief that the whole structure [of prison guard pay] should be overhauled," said Allen, who was vice chairman of the House Corrections Committee last session. "We need to build in more incentives to keep good correctional officers on the job."

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SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2000

# Sheriff suit cuts to the county chase

It may be one of the more interesting lawsuits in recent memory. Lawsuits typically make dry and boring reading, but Tarrant County's filing against Sheriff **David Williams** concerning the commissary contract is chock-full of interesting phrases.

The authors, **Kleber Miller** and **Jonathan Kerr** at Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, called Williams a "lame duck." The county accused the sheriff of "funneling cash" to a "crony." The suit also described Williams' bidding process as a "transparent sham."

the  
**INSIDER**  
report

The heated language and continued feuding between the sheriff and the county commissioners doesn't surprise **James Riddlesperger**, a Texas Christian University political science professor.

"I think it is hard to be surprised by any of the actions of Sheriff Williams," Riddlesperger said. He said the lawsuit harks back to Sheriff Don Carpenter, who fought

with commissioners for control of the commissary.

"One of the things that comes from this is what I tell my students. The good ol' days weren't all that good."



# Slain deputy's widow who remarried to get 'dowry'

By **BOB MAHLBURG**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — It's not what most people would call a dowry. But Penny Howell of Fort Worth will soon be getting an \$11,648 "marriage dowry" from Tarrant County.

In reality, the payment is closer to a funeral memorial than a wedding gift.

Howell remarried last month — 14 years after her first husband was killed while on duty as a Tarrant County sheriff's deputy.

The payment is perhaps the final chapter in the 1986 slaying of Frank Howell, whose 19-year-old killer became Tarrant's most hunted fugitive after he fled to

Mexico and eluded authorities in a 10-year manhunt involving police from both sides of the border.

Enrique "Ricky" Moreno Casas finally was caught and convicted in Mexico in 1996, where he is serving a 30-year sentence for Howell's murder.

Howell was shot four times, once with his own gun, during a routine traffic stop in 1986 on Fort Worth's south side. From that moment, Casas became a fugitive, gaining near cult-hero status among local gangs who believed that Casas had gotten away with killing a cop.

More than a decade later, the case still stirs bad memories for

Howell's friends and relatives, who would rather it just go away. Howell's brother, Pat Howell, is the department's former chief deputy.

The unusual "dowry" payment, which county commissioners signed off on yesterday, was triggered when Penny Howell remarried in April.

Under an obscure provision of state law, the spouse and children of a worker covered by workers compensation protection, who is killed while on the job, can get weekly death benefit payments.

"It could be anyone — a construction worker — anything," Tarrant County Assistant District Attorney Ray Rike said.

Those benefits continue indefinitely, unless the spouse remarries. A marriage to someone else ends the employer's obligation and the spouse gets one final check equal to two years of the payments, which the law labels "a dowry," Rike said.

Other attorneys said they find the term *dowry* an odd choice of words for such a payment, but that's what state law calls it.

"It's been in the Workers Comp Act for years," said Charlotte Knotts, a Tarrant County workers compensation specialist. Most workers in Texas are covered by the provision, she said.

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# Desperately Seeking David

*A student's quest: 'Hi, I want to talk with the sheriff'*

BY WENDY MEYER

After too many sunny afternoons by the pool, the homework, final exams and all the other responsibilities of this semester started piling up like dirty laundry.

During this period of leisure, I remembered hearing my journalism professor say, "If anyone can get a hold of the sheriff for their final assignment, I guarantee they will get an A in this course."

I was optimistic, and it sounded like a pretty easy A. He's the sheriff — he must talk to people all the time, right?

Wrong.

I opened the phone book, dialed the number for

the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department and prayed.

The automated operator didn't even give me the option of speaking to a human voice. So I just started pounding zero until I got a tired-sounding, weak-voiced woman.

"Hi, I want to talk with the sheriff, please."

"You want what?" the lady responded.

"Could I please be connected with the sheriff's line?" I repeated.

"He doesn't have a line," she said.

"Oh," I said.

"He's not here," she said. "What exactly do you need to speak with him about?"

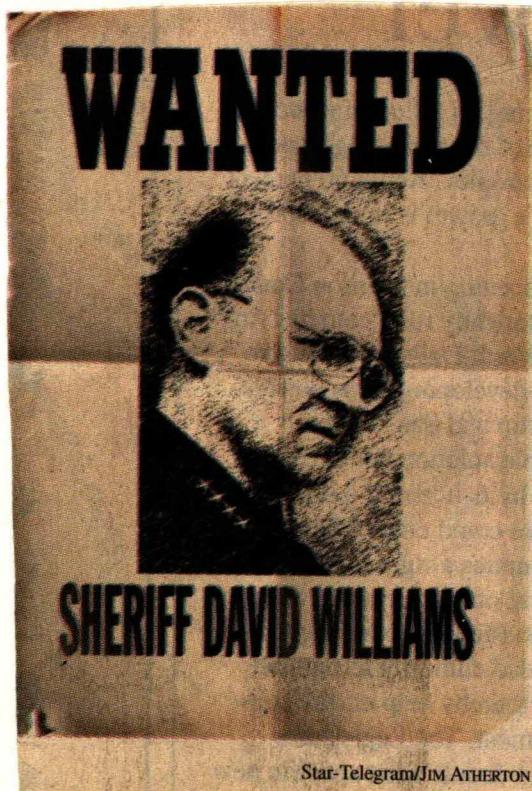
"Well, I'm doing a story ab—"

*Click.*

More calls — and more clicks — followed. (I made at least 30 calls trying to reach the sheriff.)

Finally I came up with the number for the sheriff's personal secretary. "You know, you are better off trying to get an interview with Mickey

(More on SHERIFF on Page 8E)



Star-Telegram/JIM ATHERTON

Mouse," she told me.

She wanted me to tell her the questions I would ask the sheriff; then she'd ask him, and I could give her a call back tomorrow. I didn't have any questions I wanted to ask the sheriff, other than who died and made David Williams God — I just wanted to talk to him.

She promised she'd leave a message for him to call me back.

The next day he was at a funeral and would not be back.

But Sandra promised to give him the message that I called and have him call me back.

Right.

Eventually I decided to pay the sheriff a visit.

I tried to call first: "Hello, yes, I'd like to speak to the sheriff, please."

"Is this Wendy?" a frustrated voice nearly screamed into the other line.

*Click.*

I got escorted by a friendly fellow to the back

door of the sheriff's office. "I'll show you where the door is," he said, "but the sheriff isn't here."



"This lady wants to speak with the sheriff," my escort announced to an officer securing the door. He started slapping his knee with laughter.

"He's not here," he said when he could manage a straight face.

I wobbled my chin to get sympathy.

They let me through.

By the time the elevator got to the third floor, I had come up with a really good scam for needing to speak with the sheriff, so I very confidently went straight to the secretary's desk.

"Are you Wendy?" she asked.

Busted.

So I stood at the secretary's desk and begged. She got frustrated and called Chief Larry Hester, and then I begged some more.

The first thing out of his mouth was:

"Now look here, I have a wife and two beautiful daughters, so none of that girly stuff is going to work on me."

The second thing out of his mouth was:

"He's not here."

I wobbled my chin for sympathy again.

He went to call the sheriff.

The secretary informed me that His Majesty would be out in 10 minutes. I was nervous. A man in full uniform approached me two minutes later:

"Wendy?" he asked.

I smiled broadly and put out my hand to shake his while he waved both his hands in a "No, no, no," gesture.

"I'm Capt. Herb Chambers," he explained. "You called me."

Yeah, I probably did. I think I spoke to every person in the whole building at least twice.

"Now, what exactly is this regarding?" I rolled my eyes and put my head down.

Ten minutes later, Chambers walked me into Hester's office. They told me that he had the sheriff on the speaker phone and asked me to sit down. He then told the sheriff that he had someone in his office who was going to ask him a few questions.

I asked my first question about immigration to which the sheriff responded with dead silence. I then got a lot of explanations from three people at the same time that immigration is really not part of the sheriff's responsibilities.

I asked my second question.

Dead silence. "Well, Wendy, that's a good question, I haven't really put a lot of thought into that matter," he said.

Well, great. I scribbled that statement down word for word. Thanks a million!

Chambers, however, was very helpful and walked me all the way back to the elevators and all the way down the hall and said that if I ever had any more questions, I could just call him (instead).

Overall, the assignment was not easier than writing a paper. But I don't think a paper about immigration would have given me the absolute rush of adrenaline I felt as I sped all the way back to my house, ran up the stairs and pounded out on the keyboard every single thing I remembered from the whole interview.

As for Sheriff David Williams, I don't think his office will forget me. And I don't think I'm going to forget to check out what he is up to every once in a while either.

---

WENDY MEYER, a native of San Diego, is a junior at Texas Christian University.



# Commissioners halt Cold Springs plans

**The Sheriff's Department apparently meant to store supplies at the jail.**

By **BECHETTA JACKSON**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County commissioners blocked a move yesterday by the Sheriff's Department to use a barrack at Cold Springs Correctional Facility to restock the jail commissary.

The Sheriff's Department recently cleaned and painted one side of a barrack in the vacant facility on Cold Springs Road, just north of downtown, said Gary Kirby, Tarrant County facilities director.

A divider wall, computer and phone lines were then installed, he said. "It's my understanding that they were planning to restock the commissary from Barrack C," Kirby said.

Tables, gurneys and shelves were also brought in, Kirby said.

But a Commissioners Court order issued yesterday mandates that the barracks and portable buildings inside the facility be used exclusively for work release and the detention of prisoners.

The order states that the barracks "shall not be used for storage or other operations or uses related to the operation of a jail commissary" without written order of the Commissioners Court.

The action comes less than two weeks after the county filed a lawsuit against Sheriff David Williams over a commissary contract that merges the jail's religious and commissary services.

Williams awarded the one-year contract to Aramark Correctional Services — a company with ties to local jail minister Hugh Atwell. The lawsuit claims

that by doing so, Williams sought only to create a "sweet-heart contract" for his close friend Atwell, founder and director of Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy.

"If this company was anticipating using that barrack, they can't pursue it," Commissioner J.D. Johnson said. "It cannot be used by private vendors."

The contract is scheduled to take effect tomorrow. By law, the Sheriff's Department has 10 days after a contract is signed to send it to the Commissioners Court for review, Johnson said.

The commissary program also has to be pre-approved by the Jail Standards Commission in Austin, he said.

"To my knowledge, no one has seen the contract," Johnson said.

Williams did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Capt. Herb Chambers, a Sheriff's Department spokesman, said he was unaware of the contract specifics and prefers to keep it that way.

Cold Springs opened in 1988 in an old elementary school building. Although it closed five years ago, the jail underwent extensive renovation when county officials discussed using it as a overflow minimum-security prison a year ago, Kirby said.

The plan never developed because there was not an excess of county inmates, he said.

Another plan, which calls for the 384-bed jail to be operated by a private enterprise and house inmates from outside Tarrant County, is awaiting bids, Kirby said.

Bechetta Jackson, (817) 390-7155

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THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2000

# Tarrant commissioners order phones removed from barrack

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — After years of complaining that Sheriff David Williams will not communicate with them, Tarrant County officials pulled the plug yesterday on two telephones that were recently installed for the sheriff's new business partners.

The phones were set up in "Barrack C" of the Cold Springs Correctional Facility for Aramark Corp., a national vending company that Williams has picked to run the county jail's commissary.

County commissioners do not want Aramark's business, because Williams plans for it to be operated jointly with a jail ministry run by one of the sheriff's closest confidants, Hugh Atwell.

A one-year contract linking Aramark with Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy was scheduled to begin today. However, there was no indication it had been signed by late yesterday.

The commissioners have sued Williams over the proposed business deal, and they issued an order Tuesday prohibiting Aramark from using the county-owned Cold Springs facility, north of downtown Fort Worth.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius said he personally delivered the written order to a half-dozen Aramark officials early yesterday, as they were moving into the barrack. "They were very polite" when told to leave, Maenius said.

Southwestern Bell was then

ordered to disconnect the two telephone lines. "They have done that," Maenius said.

Appearing flustered as he was moving out of Cold Springs, Aramark's district manager, David Pontes, said he did not want to talk about the dispute between the sheriff and the commissioners.

"We're kind of caught in the middle," he said. "We want to stay totally neutral in this."

He referred questions to Aramark's corporate offices in Philadelphia, where spokeswoman Debbie Albert said she knew nothing.

Williams could not be reached to comment.

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



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2000

# Commissioners turn away company picked by sheriff

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — In a continuing dispute between Tarrant County commissioners and Sheriff David Williams, a national food vending company has been denied access for the second time to a barrack the county owns.

"I don't know how many times we have to say no," Pct. 4 Commissioner J.D. Johnson said yesterday after the Sheriff's Department asked that the space be used by Aramark Corp., which Williams recently picked to take over the commissary operations in county jail facilities.

It is the second time in a week that commissioners have turned away the Sheriff's Department and Aramark, who want to use the barrack to store commissary supplies, including food and toiletries for inmates. The barrack is in the nearly vacant Cold Springs Correctional Facility north of downtown Fort Worth.

Larry Hester, the assistant chief deputy of the Sheriff's Department, accused the commissioners of continuing a "political agenda" by refusing to allow Aramark to occupy the building.

He said the refusal has stalled Williams' plans to sign a one-year contract with Aramark to operate the commissary, which is estimated to generate about \$200,000 a month in gross sales.

"I don't understand the hardship that seems to have been placed on the Sheriff's Department to get anything," Hester said.

However, Johnson and County Judge Tom

Vandergriff said that if Aramark wants to use a county facility, it should pay rent. And Pct. 1 Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said Aramark's presence at Cold Springs would increase traffic in the area, posing a nuisance and possible danger to an adjacent neighborhood.

Commissioners have sued Williams to try to stop Aramark from taking over the commissary, which is operated by Mid-States Inc., headquartered in Dallas. Commissioners said in the lawsuit that the proposed contract between Williams and Aramark is a "sweetheart deal" because it requires the vendor to use part of its profits to pay for a jail ministry headed by Hugh Atwell, a friend and supporter of the sheriff's.

Hester said Aramark has agreed to pay the county more than what Mid-States has been paying for the right to operate the commissary. The contract reportedly requires Aramark to pay the county in monthly installments equal to \$3 for each inmate, while Mid-States has paid an average of \$2 per inmate, according to officials familiar with the negotiations. The contract is still in draft form.

"It's a better business deal, that's all we're seeking," Hester said.

Johnson disagreed with Hester. "He doesn't have the foggiest idea about what's going on; he's just a water boy for the sheriff," Johnson said.

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



# Might as well call in the pro for county mismanagement

Only one person can fix the mess at the county hospital pharmacy.

The customers are kept waiting two days — some, two weeks.

Our fine public servants came up with a novel solution: More chairs in the waiting area.

This is no way to run a drugstore.

This job calls for somebody with proven take-charge ability. We've got

a guy like that looking for work here in Tarrant County.

This is a job for Sheriff David Williams.

We know the guy takes charge:

- He tried to take charge over the Arlington police at an amusement park disturbance.

- He tried to take charge over federal

investigators when a county helicopter crashed.

- He tried to take charge and cut in front of the entire downtown Fort Worth holiday parade last November. In fact, he did.

Obviously this guy has self-esteem.

It's time for Williams and his deputies to take command of the JPS Health Network. He can bring his military weapons and his supersecret double-naught spy gear.

Of course, Williams is not always successful when he tries to take command. He didn't take command of the Republican primary race last March, when six challengers took on the two-term incumbent and left him with 14 percent of the vote.

However, Williams lost partly because he couldn't stick to a budget.

That does not seem to be a requirement at the county hospital.

Tony Alcini of Colleyville, the current administrator, signed off on a \$580,000 cost overrun for a construction job last month. He never bothered to tell county commissioners or our volunteer hospital trustees. By the way, why don't they take charge? Why

haven't we heard explanations from our board chairwoman, Fran Fuller of Bedford, or Vice Chairman Morton Minton of Fort Worth?

For this, we pay Alcini \$210,000 a year, plus a \$10,000 "incentive" and the use of a car.

Williams could go wild with that kind of money. He only makes \$107,000 a year for fouling up as county sheriff.

Apparently, JPS has already adopted the sheriff's principles of customer service.

The new pharmacy is a dizzying combination of lines and

counters. The customers can't figure out where to wait for the pills they won't get.

A new hospital phone system simply answers, "Welcome to the automated receptionist. Please enter an extension number."

I did. I heard: "Welcome to the automated receptionist ..."

The JPS public relations office does not have voice mail.

If you really want to complain, the hospital trustees don't meet until June 29. They only meet twice a month on weekday afternoons — when working people and daytime caregivers can't go.

We need to get this drugstore fixed, before Tarrant County winds up in one of Al Gore's Texas-smear campaign ads.

At least the sheriff could get those prescriptions moving. If he couldn't motivate the pharmacists, he'd fire them and contract the job out to his \$60,000-a-year chaplain pals.

Only one thing worries me. I'm afraid he'd bring in the drug dogs.

Bud Kennedy's column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.  
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TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2000

### **Williams answers lawsuit over commissary contract**

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams has filed a formal response to a lawsuit by county commissioners accusing the sheriff of creating a "sweetheart contract" for a close friend.

The county commissioners' suit, filed last month in 48th State District Court, says that Williams orchestrated a deal to combine lucrative commissary profits with a jail ministry program to "feather the nest" of Hugh Atwell, founder and director of Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy.

Williams, who will leave office at year's end, declined to comment when the suit was filed. But in a formal response filed on Friday, the sheriff's attorneys ask to have the suit thrown out and say that the sheriff has sole legal power to control the commissary and may make a contract extending beyond his term.

"Williams as sheriff is synonymous with Tarrant County," the filing says.

Commissioners have asked the court to void a one-year contract agreed to by Williams, Aramark Corp. Correctional Services and Atwell's ministry. The sheriff's filing says such action would violate the Texas Constitution.



SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 2000

### Meeting with Lon Evans

After reading Wendy Meyer's May 28 commentary about trying to meet with Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, I had to write about my two meetings with former Sheriff Lon Evans.

His daughter, Marlon, and I were college freshman roommates at Texas Tech in 1953-54. We met after arriving in Lubbock.

During that school year, Lon Evans came to the dorm while on a business trip, and we were introduced and chatted a few minutes. After that year I lost track of Marlon.

In the early '70s, I was tapped for jury duty. During a court recess, I decided to go to the sheriff's office to ask about Marlon. I told the secretary who I was; she pointed to a closed door and said the sheriff would love to see me and to go in.

I opened the door; Evans looked up and said: "You're Eileen, Marlon's roommate from college. How are you?"

I was stunned. It has been about 20 years since our other meeting. We visited for several minutes.

Marlon, wherever you are, that was some dad you had.

**Eileen Watson**  
*Arlington*



SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2000

the  
**INSIDER**  
report

## *The furniture remains in the office*

When Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams** leaves office at the end of the year, he wants to take part of the office with him.

A written message to the county's purchasing agent, **Jack Beacham**, was short and to the point: "The Sheriff wants to know if he can purchase the antique office furniture that is located in his office. He wants to buy it himself with his money for his personal use."

No, said Beacham, explaining that the county does not allow employees — or departing officeholders — to take off with government-issued property unless it is first deemed to be of little or no value.

The furniture in Williams' office is mostly antique, refurbished and expensive, said Beacham, who recently inventoried items in the sheriff's personal offices in downtown Fort Worth and at the Green Bay substation.

Another item that will be staying, the purchasing agent said, is the sheriff's big-screen television, located in one of the two offices.



# Order halts county jail contract

**A July 10 hearing is scheduled on the commissary deal.**

**BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.**

*Star-Telegram Staff Writer*

**FORT WORTH** — A judge issued an order yesterday temporarily blocking Sheriff David Williams from going into business with a national vendor and a jail ministry group.

State district Judge Bob McCoy, in issuing a temporary restraining order, said a multimillion-dollar contract between Williams, Aramark Corp. Correctional Services and Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy may be found to be "void and unenforceable."

The order also said such a business deal, mixing the sale of snacks to prisoners with the ministry to inmates in the Tarrant County Jail, could cause the county to be "irreparably injured" by the "high probability" of costly litigation.

McCoy acted in response to a

lawsuit filed against Williams last month by members of the Tarrant County Commissioners Court, who want to block the contract from taking effect.

A July 10 hearing was scheduled for McCoy to hear arguments on whether to keep the contract on hold pending the outcome of a civil trial.

Williams was out of the city and could not be reached to comment.

Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester said, "I find it unfortunate that the commissioners have sought this. I think the citizens of Tarrant County will suffer because of it. ...

"We still feel this is a valid contract ... and a best-business deal for the citizens and the

inmates in Tarrant County," Hester said, adding: "But of course, the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office will comply with the judge's order."

The one-year contract, signed Friday and scheduled to take effect next Monday, calls for Aramark to operate commissary services in the jail — a lucrative business that generates an estimated \$200,000 a month in gross sales.

Part of the profits would fund the jail ministry program, headed by Williams' friend, Hugh Atwell, according to the contract.

In their lawsuit, commissioners accuse Williams of orchestrating the contract to "feather the nest" for Atwell.

The commissioners also contend in the lawsuit that the lame-duck sheriff, defeated in the Republican primary, should not be making business

deals that extend past year's end, when he will leave office.

Atwell did not return phone calls made to his office.

And Debbie Albert, spokeswoman for Aramark's corporate office in Philadelphia, said she was unaware of the judge's order and could not comment.

The jail commissary — commonly referred to as the "banana wagon" — is operated by Mid-States Services, based in Dallas.

Mid-States' contract with the county has expired, and it is operating the commissary on a month-by-month basis.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700



# Sheriff's spokesman leaves department

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — The spokesman for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, who was often called upon to deflect questions — and controversies — away from Sheriff David Williams, has resigned from the department.

Capt. Herb Chambers submitted his resignation Friday, effective immediately. Chambers did not return a phone call seeking comment.

Capt. John Dalton, acting spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, said he did not

know the reasons for the resignation. Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester refused to comment on what led to Chambers' departure, referring all questions to Dalton.

Sources close to the recent developments, however, said Chambers had recently fallen out of favor with the sheriff.

Williams is out of town and could not be reached to comment. He reportedly was angered when Chambers was quoted in news stories as saying he did not want to have anything to do with a controversial contract the sheriff arranged.

That contract, which was signed Friday, combines the operations of the Tarrant County Jail commissary with a jail ministry group headed by the sheriff's friend, Hugh Atwell.

Yesterday, a state district judge issued a restraining order temporarily blocking the contract from taking effect.

Chambers joined the Sheriff's Department in May 1999 after a 22-year career with the National Rifle Association. "I am here to help modernize the



Star-Telegram Archives/RON T. ENNIS

**Capt. Herb Chambers** gave notice Friday, effective immediately.

When Williams lost in the March 14 Republican primary, ruining his chances for a third term in office, Chambers tried to discourage a *Star-Telegram* reporter from attempting to interview the sheriff.

"The man just lost his job," Chambers told the reporter. "Give him a break. He has to be devastated."

sheriff's office ... working to improve communication and find ways to better support the deputies in the field," he said shortly after being hired.

But as the official spokesman for the department, Chambers often found himself fielding a volley of reporters' questions, his boss nowhere around, each time Williams

stepped into a new controversy.

Unlike the sheriff, who seldom speaks without a prepared text, Chambers often was

spontaneous — and sometimes humorous — when dealing with reporters.

Chambers was in charge of damage control in December after it was revealed that Williams was reported absent without leave in 1976 while in the military. "It was one thing in his ... [military] file," he said at the time. "It's a nothing. But if you're trying to make waves, oh, boy, that's a biggie."



Sunday, June 25, 2000

#### STORY ON SHERIFF

### Discrediting a public servant

It amazes me when I consider the extent to which the *Star-Telegram* tries to discredit good public servants and to enhance its obvious political agendas. I refer to the May 28 Weekly Review essay by Texas Christian University student Wendy Meyer, "Desperately Seeking David."

I speculate that if her topic had been something other than Sheriff David Williams, you would not have given her essay a second glance. Instead, you added your graphics and premiered an

unsubstantiated tale by a self-professed scamster.

I asked Meyer if the interview would be published. She said that it would not — that it was a school project only.

Even though Meyer had been previously informed that immigrations enforcement was the priority of the federal government, she still asked irrelevant questions of the sheriff that did not target his main focus of duties or enforcement.

I watched while she scribbled during the sheriff's answers and wondered how she could develop a report with such limited, partial and unorganized notes. Now I know.

I wonder if she got the promised "A" from her professor. I would think that the university and the professor would be embarrassed and ashamed to reward such a manipulative student.

Perhaps an ethics class is not required in journalism. Surely I see little enough evidence of its use in the *Star-Telegram*.

**Larry D. Hester**

*Assistant chief deputy*

*Tarrant County sheriff's office*



THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2000

# OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

## ■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

### Ridiculing a student

I would like to come to the defense of Texas Christian University student Wendy Meyer, who was so blatantly ridiculed in a Sunday letter by Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department for her May 28 essay, "Desperately Seeking David."

Not only was Hester critical of the student's attempt to interview our "shadow sheriff," but he demonstrated unprofessional conduct by trying to belittle her college professor, the university, and even the *Star-Telegram* for carrying her story.

Now Hester wants to mouth about "ethics" and being "manipulative." Boy, there's really one where the pot is calling the kettle black.

Floyd F. Clark  
Fort Worth



SUNDAY, JULY 2, 2000

the  
**INSIDER**  
report

The new question surrounding Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams** comes in three words: Where is he?

Williams and a deputy, Lt. **Dave Barrington**, left for Kansas City on June 14 to attend the National Sheriffs' Association conference. Barrington returned on June 22, a day after the conference ended, but Williams was not with him.

As of Friday, more than a week after the conference, Williams still had not been sighted inside the county borders. Several Sheriff's Department officials said they did not know Williams' whereabouts or what he was doing.

When told that Williams seemed to be AWOL (again), Pct. 4 Commissioner **J.D. Johnson** said, "I don't care whether he ever comes back."

■



TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2000

## Judge hears arguments on suit against sheriff

**FORT WORTH** — State district Judge Bob McCoy heard arguments but did not rule yesterday on whether Tarrant County commissioners can sue Sheriff David Williams over a disputed contract to operate the jail's commissary.

Williams' lawyer, Shelby Sharpe, said in a morning hearing that state law gives the sheriff "exclusive authority over this contract" and that the Texas attorney general's office must decide the issue.

The commissioners' attorney, Kleber Miller, countered that the county can sue the sheriff in state court "to protect its rights" to conduct government business.

The hearing involved a lawsuit, filed by the commissioners, in an attempt to block a proposed contract between Williams and a vendor, Aramark, to run the commissary services in the Tarrant County Jail.

Another hearing will be in about 10 days, McCoy said.



# Tarrant sheriff guilty in election finance case

BY NEIL STRASSMAN  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — The Texas Ethics Commission has found Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams guilty of violating state campaign finance laws.

Williams, a two-term sheriff defeated in his bid for a third term when he garnered 14 percent of the vote in the Republican primary, used a Sheriff's Department newsletter to reprint a speech during his campaign, a violation of state law.

Williams, who has already paid a \$500 civil penalty assessed by the state, did not return a telephone message left with a spokesman. Chief Deputy Larry Hester said he knew of the complaint against his boss but was unaware of the commission's finding, filed July 6.

The complaint was filed with the Ethics Commission by Darrell Clements of Hurst, a jail lieutenant and Democratic candidate for sheriff, who was also defeated in the primary.

The complaint said that Williams used county-owned photocopiers and paper and taxpayer-paid employees to copy a campaign speech and then distributed it to hundreds of employees.

"He got caught with his hand in the cookie jar and had to pay \$500 for his misdeeds," Clements said, adding that he believes that county commissioners should make the sheriff reimburse the county.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said he would like to see Williams pay the county for using its equipment.

"I thought he violated the law and now it's time for him to start paying the fiddler. He was asking for prayers, votes and money from his employees," Johnson said.

Local and state officials can enforce campaign laws, Assistant Tarrant County District Attorney Ann Diamond said.

"Any public citizen or official can bring it to our attention and we will review it," she said.

Williams violated a provision of the law that

prohibits an elected officeholder or an employee "from spending or authorizing the spending of public funds for advertising," said Karen Lundquist, general counsel for the Ethics Commission in Austin.

"The newsletter basically contained an election speech and the commission found that was advertising," Lundquist said.

Williams periodically printed and distributed a Sheriff's Report to his employees. On Oct. 5, he published a report with a section titled, "Special Edition, Campaign for Re-election Speech," reprinting a speech he had given three days earlier.

He told the ethics commission that he felt it was necessary to publish the entire speech in the report because a local news article had failed to include "the actual point and direction of the majority of the speech" and he wanted his employees to know exactly what was said.

Neil Strassman, (817) 390-7657  
strass@star-telegram.com



the  
**INSIDER**  
report

SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2000

■  
When the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department recently got some new

horses for the sheriff's stray animal unit, the name of one horse attracted attention from County Commissioner **J.D. Johnson**.

The horse is named "J.D."

Johnson, a frequent critic of controversies involving Sheriff **David Williams**, said the name made him just a touch suspicious.

"I figured someone in the Sheriff's Department decided to pull a prank," said Johnson. "But I have checked it out and determined that the horse was named that before it came to the county."

Johnson said he also felt better when he learned another new horse was named Hank — as in Hank Pope, the sheriff's executive chief deputy.

"Hank and I both had a laugh about it," Johnson said.

■



# COMMENTARY

the  
**INSIDER**  
report

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 2000

■  
**Dee Anderson's** race in the Republican primary for Tarrant County sheriff was not only successful — it was expensive.

Anderson, who won the primary outright despite a crowded field of contenders, including incumbent **David Williams**, said he spent about \$100,000.

Campaign finance reports show that Anderson, since February, has paid more than \$75,000 to the Eppstein Co., owned by **Bryan Eppstein**. Most of that money, Anderson said, was to pay for the direct mailing of campaign literature to potential supporters.

Meanwhile, Fort Worth policeman **Luther Perry**, the successful Democratic candidate in the sheriff's race, spent about \$7,700 in the March primary, according to his campaign manager, **Even Junker**.

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This week's contributors: JOHN MORITZ,  
KRISTIN N. SULLIVAN, MARTHA DELLER  
and JACK DOUGLAS JR.



# County bills sheriff for use of newsletter in campaign

By **KAREN BROOKS**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams owes the county \$324 for using a Sheriff's Department newsletter to copy a campaign speech during his failed re-election bid, county commissioners said yesterday.

County auditors charged Williams 24 cents per copy — 12 cents per side for the double-sided newsletter — and multiplied it by 1,350, the number of Sheriff's Department employees estimated to have received a copy, County Auditor Renee Tidwell said.

A Williams spokesman said the sheriff plans to pay it and has not given much thought to whether he'll try to appeal the process.

"The sheriff does intend to pay this," Chief Deputy Larry Hester said.

In October, Williams printed a special page in the regular Sheriff's Department newsletter with a copy of a campaign speech for re-election. He said public reports about his speech were wrong.

The Texas Ethics Commission, however, said on July 6 that his actions violated state campaign laws and fined him \$500.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, who called for Williams to repay the county after that decision, said the sheriff was lucky the bill wasn't higher.

"I think that is a very fair billing to the sheriff," Johnson said. "I think that if the truth were known, a lot more time and effort went into what he did and what his people did on county time."

Johnson said he doubted that the matter would be pursued in criminal court.

The complaint about the newsletter was filed by jail Lt. Darrell Clements, a Democratic candidate for sheriff who was defeated in the primary.

"He should be required to repay the cost he incurred to the county," Clements said. "If that's what the cost was, I'm satisfied with it."

Karen Brooks, (817) 390-7752  
kbrooks@star-telegram.com

## Fort Worth area

### County vs. sheriff civil lawsuit proceeding

**FORT WORTH** — State district Judge Bob McCoy denied a request yesterday to dismiss a civil lawsuit filed by Tarrant County commissioners against Sheriff David Williams.

"Motion to dismiss is denied," McCoy said in a written order, paving the way for a future trial to determine whether Williams can enter into a controversial contract to operate the commissary in the Tarrant County Jail.

In an effort to block the contract, commissioners filed a lawsuit alleging that Williams was attempting to set up a "sweetheart" deal by agreeing to do business with a national vendor, Aramark, which in turn would pay a jail ministry founded by one of the sheriff's friends.

Williams and his lawyers have countered by citing state law saying he has "exclusive authority" to run the jail commissary the way he sees fit.

### Ex-inmate accuses jail of losing \$5,300 of his money

A released inmate is accusing the Tarrant County jail officials of losing \$5,300 he had when he was arrested — but was gone when he was released 12 hours later, officials said.

Investigators from the Sheriff's Department and Fort Worth Police Department have launched internal investigations to determine why Manuel Morales Troche was reportedly carrying \$5,383 when he was arrested Sunday morning, and had only \$83 when he was released Sunday night.

"He came back wanting his money," said sheriff's department spokesman Lt. Dave Barrington.

Barrington would not say why Troche, who has not been formally charged, was arrested. Troche, who does not have a listed telephone number, could not be reached to comment yesterday.

It was unclear when Troche said he discovered the money missing, Barrington said.

"Between our investigators and Fort Worth's investigators, we'll get to the bottom of this," Barrington said. "We will find out what happened."



SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2000

### **Jailer arrested on charge of stealing inmate's cash**

FORT WORTH — A Tarrant County jailer was booked into jail yesterday on a charge of stealing money from an inmate.

Jeter Fulbright III, 22, of Richland Hills, who worked in the jail for about a year, was charged with felony theft on accusations that he took \$5,300 from an inmate he had booked into jail Sunday morning, said Capt. John Dalton, a sheriff's spokesman.

Manuel Morales Troche was carrying \$5,383 when he was arrested Sunday morning but was given only \$83 when he was released Sunday night, investigators said.

Authorities did not say why Troche was arrested.

Sheriff's investigators recovered a 50-inch big-screen television, a pistol and \$2,900, Dalton said.

Investigators from the Sheriff's Department and Fort Worth Police Department launched an internal investigation after Troche lodged his complaint, and Fulbright eventually admitted taking the money, Dalton said. Fulbright's bail was set at \$1,000, he said.



# Edgecliff man jailed after 8-hour standoff

BY YVETTE CRAIG  
AND BILL TEETER  
Star-Telegram Staff Writers

**EDGECLIFF VILLAGE** — A former Crowley reserve police officer barricaded himself in his Edgecliff Village home with his two children for eight hours before being arrested yesterday morning, the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department said.

Members of the department's Fugitive Squad Unit went to the home of John Arthur Wilson Jr., 45, in the 1200 block of York Drive, just before midnight Thursday to serve a Hood County arrest warrant for theft, said Capt. Dave Barrington, a sheriff's spokesman.

Crowley police Lt. T.J. Sims said Wilson served as an unpaid Crowley reserve officer for 12 months, ending in May 1992.

The warrant was issued because Wilson is accused of writing a worthless check for \$2,500 to retain a lawyer to handle divorce proceedings for a female friend, Hood County District Attorney Richard Hattox said.

Conviction on the bad-check charge is a state jail felony with punishment of as much as two years behind bars and a fine up to \$10,000. First offenses have mandatory probation, Hattox said.

Wilson's attorney, George Trimber, did not return a telephone call to his office yesterday.

During the standoff, Wilson barricaded himself inside, saying he was armed and would "rather shoot himself than surrender," according to Barrington. The former officer's children, an 11-year-old boy and 14-year-old girl, were inside the home.

It was not clear whether he was holding his children hostage or they just did not want to come out.

Additional sheriff's deputies arrived at the scene, including members of the tactical team, along with hostage negotiators Don Jenson and Michael Guthrie, Barrington said.

Jenson and Guthrie helped end the standoff peacefully, persuading Wilson to release his children to their mother about 8:30 a.m. They were unharmed.

Wilson surrendered about 20 minutes later without further incident.

During the arrest, sheriff's deputies said they found a Winchester 20-gauge shotgun inside the home, Barrington said.

Wilson was being held in the county jail for the Hood County felony warrant and was expected to be charged in connection with the standoff, officials said.

"We are extremely proud of sheriff's deputies Jenson and Guthrie," Barrington said. "They were able to help bring this situation to a peaceful conclusion."



## Ex-spokesman for sheriff may be sued for wrecking car

Officials say Herb  
Chambers was not  
authorized to use the  
county patrol vehicle.

By MAX B. BAKER  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Former Tarrant County sheriff's spokesman Herb Chambers may be sued by the county for wrecking a patrol car that he was not authorized to use, officials said.

District attorney's representatives will talk to Tarrant County commissioners Tuesday about suing Chambers. The county seeks \$11,238 from Chambers or his insurance carrier, officials said.

Chambers veered off the road, snapped a telephone pole and crashed into a tree while driving home in October. He blamed his erratic driving on new blood pressure medicine.

Chambers was driving to his Hood County home, but he was not authorized to take the car home, officials said. If he had had a take-home car, the county's insurance would have covered the damage.

"He drove it home and he wrecked it and he owes the county for it because he was using the car illegally," Commissioner J.D. Johnson said.

Chambers, who left the Sheriff's Department in June, did not return a message left on his telephone seeking comment. But at the time of the wreck, he said that he had been driving the car home for about six months and that his use of the vehicle was allowable.

Chambers wrecked a 1996 Ford Crown Victoria with 48,000 miles on it. He said he needed the car because he was on duty "24-7" answering calls. He said it was appropriate that he arrive at incidents in a patrol car.

The car was one of 15 at the center of a dispute last year between Sheriff David Williams and the Commissioners Court about take-home cars. During budget deliberations, commissioners slashed the cars from Williams' budget and he was told to turn them over. Williams didn't immediately return the cars, and during that time Chambers wrecked the vehicle.

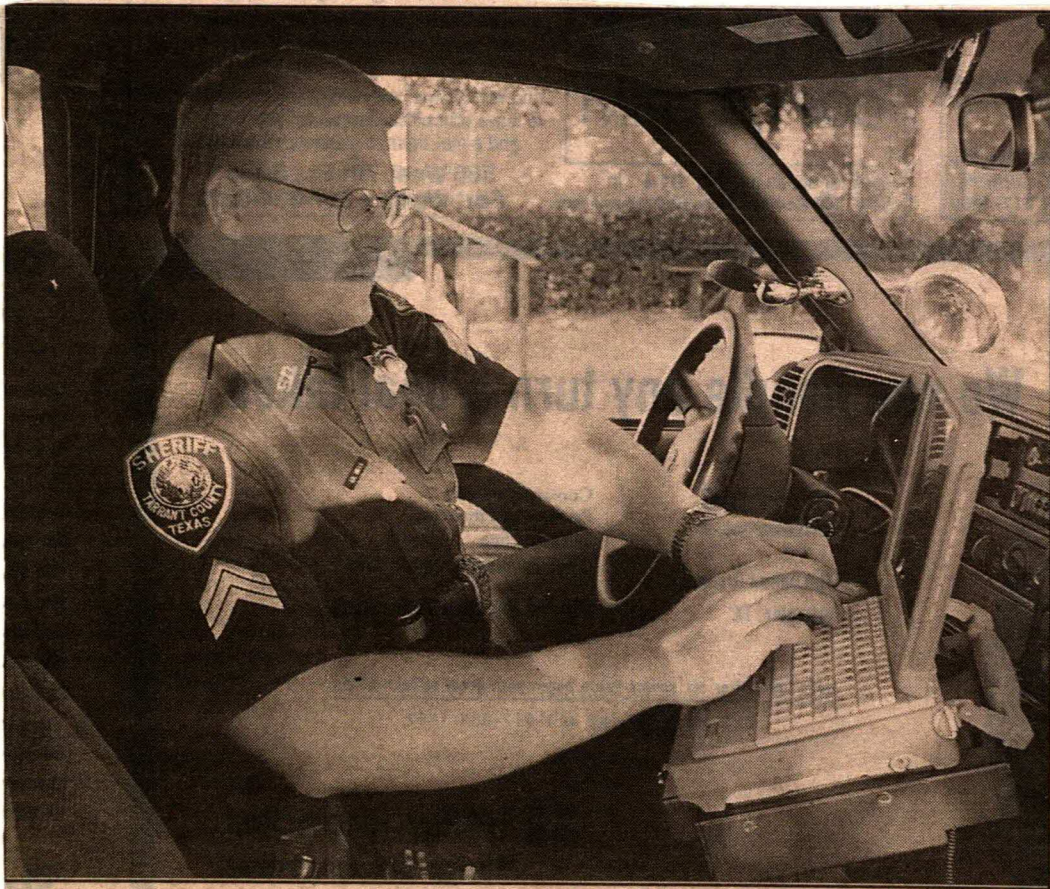
In June, Chambers abruptly resigned from the Sheriff's Department. Sources said he had fallen out of favor with the sheriff.

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# Deputies ONLINE

Wireless computer communications system  
keeps Sheriff's Department in touch



Star-Telegram/DALE BLACKWELL

Sgt. Jim Miller uses one of the portable laptop units that the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department uses to keep connected to the Internet and its own intranet.



By ANDREA AHLES

**FORT WORTH** — The night the tornado hit downtown Fort Worth in March, telephone lines, cellular phones, pagers and cable systems went down.

For the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, the loss of communication would have been devastating if not for a cellular digital packet data system installed a few months earlier.

"We lost every command system we had except the 800-MHz radio system and CDPD," Lt. Robert Durko says. "CDPD was the only means of communications because our 800 system was often overloaded."

The CDPD system comprises 46 portable computers that can talk to one another and to headquarters via a wireless system provided by AT&T. Each sheriff's officer out on patrol takes one of the computers and connects it to a base station in the car. He or she can then gain access to information and communicate with headquarters.

After the tornado wreaked havoc in downtown, the Sheriff's Department used the CDPD devices to help control the perimeter around the affected buildings, Durko says.

The department installed the system in October, partly as a Y2K fix. The system transfers data wirelessly at a 19.2-bit rate over an encrypted connection,

Durko says.

"Because it is secure, you can give an officer secure information without it being overheard by a scanner," Durko says.

For example, officers can put out all-points bulletins over the system without worrying that the suspect will be alerted. The system also ties into the state's Department of Public Safety database so officers can check drivers' licenses and motor vehicle tags during traffic stops.

The computers also have Internet access, but that is limited to supervisors, Durko says.

AT&T Wireless, which

provides the wireless connections, markets its CDPD service to many public agencies such as law enforcement, fire departments and emergency medical services.

Agencies often use CDPD in conjunction with other communication devices such as the private networks that many departments have, says Tome Martin, government data representative for AT&T Wireless.

"CDPD provides a greater amount of redundancy, and we feel it's a much more reliable service than the private networks," Martin says, adding that more than 20 departments in the Metroplex use the CDPD connections.

The Sheriff's Department pays \$45 to register each device and \$49 a month to use AT&T's CDPD service, Durko says.

The computer hardware, made by Itronix, that the department uses is "ultra-rugged" and can be dropped and endure harsh weather and still function properly. The devices have a battery life of two hours but last longer when plugged into the docking stations in a patrol car.

The system uses a Cerulean Packet Cluster Patrol software system that shows who is on duty and what they are doing. The software includes a chat room where officers can trade real-time messages.

"Officers share information between each other all the time in the live chat so it



doesn't burden our radio system," Durko says.

He says the department is constantly re-evaluating the technology it uses and upgrading to the latest software and hardware.

In the next few months, the department will be the beta test site for a dispatch program called geoCAD, made by Fort Worth-based Indico.

With GeoCAD, when a dispatcher takes a 911 call, the software will figure out which units can respond.

"It is totally map-based so they can literally see what resources they have available for a type of call," says Janice Seifert, sales manager for Indico.

Indico is donating the geoCAD program to the Sheriff's Department while it is being tested. The program will have vehicle locator icons and can show mobile hazards such as tornadoes, Seifert says.

GeoCAD can also transmit floor plans of buildings to officers in the field, using CDPD, in the event of a standoff or when hostages are being held.

**T**arrant County will be the first department nationwide to use the system, Seifert says. The Colony will probably be the next law enforcement agency to use geoCAD, she adds.

The Sheriff's Department is also looking at card swipers for patrol cars to allow officers to swipe driver's licenses, and automatic ticket-writing programs that will

print out tickets in a patrol car, Durko says.

Much of the technology Durko looks at for the department will help reduce paperwork. The less time officers spend on paperwork, the more manpower can be in the field addressing calls and crises, Durko says.

"We're trying to bring the Sheriff's Department to the forefront and to be a leader in technology in Fort Worth," Durko says. "We're going to spend less time handling reports and more time keeping Tarrant County safe."

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## County plans to sue former official over car wreck

By **KAREN BROOKS**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County plans to sue a former sheriff's spokesman for wrecking a department vehicle the county says he wasn't supposed to drive.

County commissioners authorized the Tarrant County District Attorney's office yesterday to claim \$11,238 from Herb Chambers or his insurance carrier, officials said.

The district attorney's office said the suit would be filed within a few days.

Chambers resigned from the Sheriff's Department in June. Telephone messages left at his home were not returned yesterday.

While driving to his Hood County home in October, Chambers wrecked a 1996 Ford Crown Victoria, a Sheriff's Department vehicle, with 48,000 miles on it when he veered off the road, snapped a telephone pole and hit a tree. The car was totaled. Chambers was not hurt.

Sheriff's Department officials did not penalize Chambers for the wreck or find him at fault.

Commissioners said Chambers was not authorized to take the car home. Had he been authorized, the county's insurance carrier would have covered the damages, they said. Chambers blamed his erratic driving on new blood pressure medication.

Chambers said at the time of the wreck that he had been using the car for about six months and that it was allowed because he was on duty "24-7" answering calls.

The Crown Victoria was among 15 vehicles at the center of a dispute between the sheriff and the commissioners, who had slashed the take-home cars from Williams' budget and had ordered him to turn them over.

Chambers said at the time that Sheriff David Williams had told him to keep using the cars until Williams got an attorney general's opinion — which made at least one commissioner question whether the sheriff was breaking rules, too.

"Did the sheriff authorize it or not?" Commissioner Marti Van-Ravenswaay asked. "If he [Chambers] was following his own supervisor's orders, that would mean they were both violating county policy."

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# Sheriff's workers' pay in jeopardy

## Williams' budget use criticized

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — County commissioners want to limit Sheriff David Williams' control of public funds during his last three months in office in hopes of curtailing what they call a pattern of irresponsible behavior that has escalated throughout his eight-year tenure.

Some commissioners learned yesterday in a budget hearing that there may not be enough money left in this year's budget to pay the department's approximately 1,200 employees through Sept. 30, when the fiscal year ends.

To help cover the projected \$300,000 shortfall, commissioners said they plan to demand that Williams stop all overtime for employees who aren't assigned to county jails. They also want to release only enough of the money in Williams' yearly budget to last him through Dec. 31, his last day in office.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson said he'll recommend that Williams only be given access to three months worth of his yearly budget — which county budget officials estimate will be \$61,521,495 — “so that he can

(More on SHERIFF on Page 7B)

not spend the entire year's budget” before a new sheriff takes office in January.

Johnson has discussed imposing that restriction on all elected county officials who are leaving office at the end of the year.

Commissioners discovered late yesterday during a tumultuous budget hearing — after which Williams' budget officer, Sherry Johnson, left the courtroom in tears — that sheriff's overtime and holiday pay already are so far over budget that employees likely will not get their full paychecks in late September. And it will only get worse if the shortfall grows, said Ron Bertel, first assistant county auditor.

Bertel said auditors would come up with a more definite figure on the overrun today, before they meet with officials from the dis-

trict attorney's and county administrator's offices to find out how much the commissioners can do — or can compel the sheriff to do — to prevent the shortfall.

“If they stopped all the overtime over there, they might have enough to barely pay these salaries,” Commissioner Glen Whitley said. “Any overtime outside of confinement [jails], I think, should be eliminated.”

Bertel said Williams could do a number of things to save money to pay his employees — including putting off benefits such as uniform maintenance reimbursements, mileage checks and other nonsalary expenses.

The court wants Williams at next week's regularly scheduled Commissioners Court meeting to discuss it, Whitley said, although appearances by the sheriff are rare.

Budget officials and auditors who reviewed Williams' budget request, which was \$62,901,508, said they had noticed the shortfall but had been unable to get an explanation from sheriff's officials.

The department has 63 vacancies and is just barely making its state-required employee-to-prisoner ratio.

Chief Deputy Hank Pope, who attended the hearing in Williams' place, said that he did not realize the salary budget had reached such a crisis and that Williams had not mentioned it.

“I'll make him aware of it,” he said.

During the hearing, Johnson and Pope told commissioners that overtime during Y2K preparations and after the March tornado were the main reasons for the overtime budget-busting.

In preparation for any Y2K disaster, all sheriff's employees were required to be on duty over New Year's — including clerks, secretaries and Johnson, the budget director.

Overtime and holiday pay for December 1999 was \$204,082.68 more than the same month one year ago, budget officials said.



## DEPARTMENT'S PAYCHECKS AT RISK

# Sheriff running over budget

By KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County auditors will meet today with Sheriff's Department officials to figure out how to prevent the department from running out of money within the next month, officials said yesterday.

County officials are concerned that Sheriff David Williams' approximately 1,200 employees won't get their full paychecks for the last two weeks of September, when the fiscal year ends.

Commissioners have vowed not to let that happen.

"We have got to pay these people," Commissioner Dionne Bagsby said during the sheriff's budget hearing Wednesday, when the short-

fall was discovered.

Sheriff's officials contend that with a staff shortage, an overtime budget cut in half over the past two years, Y2K and the March tornado, nobody should be surprised that the department is tight on cash — least of all the commissioners' budget officers.

Chief Deputy Larry Hester, a Williams spokesman, suggested that commissioners dip into the county's \$2.5 million undesignated account set aside for new programs and unanticipated costs.

"I find it reasonable that we're in this situation with those extra expenses," Hester said. "We don't have an option in working seven days a week, 24-hour services when we're aiding a citizen in their time of need. We can't tell this rape victim to come back later."

Overtime and holiday pay alone have already exceeded their budgets by an estimated \$300,000, county auditors said.

But even if funds are shifted into salaries from other areas of the sheriff's budget, the entire \$60 million will still be overspent by anywhere from \$147,500 to \$288,000, County Auditor Renee Tidwell said.

"That's a pretty small amount on a \$60 million budget," Tidwell said, "but there is a section of the local government code ... that requires this office not to allow that to happen."

The budget shortfall, the first one at the Sheriff's Department in at least a decade, is largely because of overtime that was more than double what was planned in the budget, sheriff's officials said.

Tidwell said that if the sheriff can't find ways to make ends meet through September, then she will have to "make some decisions" on the matter.

Among the alternatives are a hiring freeze or barring the sheriff from making any more purchases until October, she said.

"There are several options, but it's my discretion," Tidwell said.

Tidwell and county administrators met with officials from the district attorney's office yesterday to discuss what could be done to save money at the department. Attorneys are expected to advise the commissioners by next week on what they can do — or compel Williams to do — to save money.

Commissioner Glen Whitley suggested cutting overtime in all areas of the Sheriff's Department except the jails.

However, 56 out of the department's 63 vacancies are in the jails — and that's where most of the overtime comes from, Hester said.

"A hiring freeze when we're short-handed anyhow would only mean that, because we're going to continue to have attrition because of the low pay, those who are left here are going to have to work even more overtime," Hester said.

Whitley said yesterday that before sheriff's officials start expecting commissioners to take up the slack, he wants Williams to come to the table with some creative solutions.

"I'd like to see a little more cooperation from the Sheriff's Department than we've had in the past," he said.



# Sheriff found to hold reins on payroll

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Sheriff David Williams may have a way to duck the harness that Tarrant County commissioners are trying to sling around his spending habits, attorneys said yesterday.

County commissioners, who want to limit his access to next year's budget during his final months in office, found out yesterday that the largest and most flexible portion of the department's expenses is the one area they can't control: salaries and overtime.

The revelation came during a discussion about the department running out of money before the fiscal year ends next month. Yesterday, auditors arrived at an estimated shortfall of about \$270,000 from the \$59.2 million budget.

Sheriff's officials had met earlier in the day with County Auditor Renee Tidwell, Commissioner J.D. Johnson and First Assistant Auditor Ron Bertel to discuss ways around the shortfall.

A recent, mandatory six-day workweek in the jail for supervisors — in effect for staff shortages and to prepare for a state inspection, which the jail passed — has been canceled, said Chief Deputy Larry Hester, who attended the meeting.

But the pay of employees and food for inmates — both necessary items — constitute 95 percent of the department's budget, auditors said.

Hester said sheriff's officials would return to Tidwell on Monday with ways that money can be saved.

Meanwhile, the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, or CLEAT, issued a statement late yesterday saying that the group will seek "immediate injunctive [legal] relief to make sure that officers are paid," reacting to concerns that the shortfall would mean that



Star-Telegram Archives

Sheriff David Williams' department has an estimated shortfall of about 270,000, auditors say. County commissioners are trying to keep Williams from spending from next year's budget.

employees would not get paid in the final week of September.

CLEAT officials declined further comment until they make a public announcement Monday.

Federal law mandates that employees get their checks at some point, and county officials have vowed that will happen.

During yesterday's discussion, County Judge Tom Vandergriff called it "deplorable" that the budget is in dire straits.

Talking to area legislators "is

definitely in order" about coming up with ways the commissioners can rein in future elected officials, he said.

"We need to move in every possible direction to prevent every future abuse," Vandergriff told Assistant District Attorney Ray Rike, who delivered the news to the commissioners. "It's deplorable what's happened. I plead with you and everyone else in this matter to use whatever resources are available."

The one way that commissioners thought they could prevent it was to put a limit on the amount of money politicians can access in their final months in office.

Johnson said this week that he wants to keep Williams from spending more than three months worth of next year's budget so "he cannot spend the entire year's budget" before he leaves office.



EARNING THE PEOPLE'S TRUST DAILY

■ EDITORIALS

# Sheriff's Payroll

**The Tarrant department has a money mess. How long until January?**

The damage inflicted on the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department by its missing-in-action leader goes much deeper than a loss of reputation and a spate of jokes.

The men and women who have dutifully worn the uniform of the county's law enforcement agency throughout the turmoil between Sheriff David Williams and the Tarrant County Commissioners Court are frustrated, emotionally battered and just plain worn down.

Now it looks as if their paychecks may be in jeopardy because of Williams' inability to manage the department.

Expenditures revealed during last week's budget hearings before the Commissioners Court — hearings that Williams, once again, didn't bother to attend — show that the department has used so much money in overtime that it

may not have adequate funds to meet payroll before the fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.

A big contributing factor in the \$300,000 shortfall was Williams' mandate that all department employees be on duty leading up to New Year's. Overtime and holiday pay in December 1999 was \$200,000 more than what was spent in December 1998.

The greatest insult that Williams heaps on his administrative staff is to put them — people trying to be responsible and responsive — in the position of having to appear before the commissioners to not only justify his budget requests but to offer explanations for why the department is in the mess it's in.

Fortunately for the people of Tarrant County, there are professionals in the Sheriff's Department. Unfortunately, one isn't the sheriff.

January can't come soon enough, when this sham of an elected official is finally out of office.



## Deputies say commissioners get raises, shortchange them

By **BOB MAHLBURG**

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County sheriff's deputies, angered by reports that there might not be enough money to pay them for the rest of the fiscal year, complained yesterday that county commissioners have "voted themselves big fat pay raises" while shortchanging deputies.

Deputies said they are caught in a political squabble between commissioners and Sheriff David Williams.

"They've given themselves some very large, fat pay raises, but we can't get our pay," said Ron Blair, president of the Tarrant County Deputy Sheriff's Association.

But county commissioners yesterday denied that they gave themselves large pay raises and repeated that deputies will be paid, despite a budget shortfall discovered last week. Commissioner J.D. Johnson called deputies' complaints about pay raises unfair.

County officials said last week they were concerned that the sheriff's 1,200 employees won't get full paychecks for the last two weeks of September, when the fiscal year ends.

Blair said deputies don't trust commissioners' promises. He said deputies trail other area, state, local and federal law enforcement officers in pay by 30 percent and deserve an

immediate raise of at least 15 percent.

Blair said he did not know what salary increases commissioners have received, despite labeling them as "big fat pay raises."

County salary records show that commissioners got a 3.8 percent raise in 1998, 10 percent last year and 4 percent this year.

By contrast, sheriff's employees got raises of 5.6 percent or more in 1998, from 4 percent to 10 percent last year, and 3 percent to 8 percent this year, with most getting at least 6 percent, records show.

All elected officials get the same percentage pay raise as average county employees, Budget Director Debbie Schneider said.

The proposed budget for next year would boost commissioners' pay by 4 percent and raise pay for deputies by 3 percent to 8 percent.

Blair said Tarrant County has "the highest-paid commissioners court in the state" and offered a comparison to other major counties.

But Schneider said those figures are wrong. Tarrant commissioners are paid \$95,712 per year — more than Travis County (\$68,981) or Bexar County (\$49,680), but less than Harris (\$123,060) or Dallas (\$100,872) counties. Williams is paid \$105,492 per year.

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# Sheriff's Department denied funds for character training

By KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — A high-ranking sheriff's official was denied \$470 worth of "character training" yesterday by Tarrant County commissioners who said his department had a bigger debt to pay off first.

"You've got \$300,000 to go," Commissioner Glen Whitley said to Chief Deputy Larry Hester of the Sheriff's Department, referring to a \$270,000 shortfall in the current sheriff's budget. "We're going to do everything we can to make sure more money is not wasted in that department."

Later, commissioners were even more frustrated to learn that the county had already spent \$17,000 a month earlier for the same "Character First" training for at least 100 sheriff's employees.

But even without that discovery, Hester's ill-timed request had already become a casualty in the latest battle between the commissioners and Sheriff David Williams, who will leave office in December.

Commissioners chided Williams last week when they found that a budget overrun appeared to jeopardize the final paychecks of the fiscal year.

With federal law requiring that the workers get paid, however, the commissioners have vowed not to shortchange the department's 1,200 employees at the end of

September.

Sheriff's officials and county auditors are working on ways to save money in the department for the next six weeks.

To punctuate their promise — and respond to criticism from two law-enforcement advocacy groups — commissioners unanimously passed a resolution yesterday say-

ing they will make sure the employees are paid in full and on time.

They said they felt compelled yesterday to publicly state their support for the rank and file in the Sheriff's Department.

"I would like to offer my support for the employees over there, who are working under extremely adverse conditions," Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay said before voting for the resolution.

The resolution was distributed to sheriff's employees within hours of its passage.

Officials from the Combined Law Enforcement Agencies of Texas and the Tarrant County Deputy Sheriff's Association were glad to hear of the resolution. They said yesterday they would not file suit against county officials — including Williams — as long as their paychecks arrived on time and in full. Threats of a lawsuit came up in a Monday news conference hosted by the two groups.

Johnson called it a publicity stunt. None of the commissioners were contacted by the associations after word got out that the budget was short, he said.

Ron Blair, president of the deputies' association, said his group "has never been welcome at the Commissioners Court for anything and at any time."

Members of the association, which Blair numbers between 200 and 300, were worried about the possibility of late paychecks, he said.

"We have people calling in all the time," Blair said. "I try to walk the halls of the justice center and people are stopping me and asking, 'What are they trying to do? What are the commissioners wanting to do to us now?'"



*"We're going to do everything we can to make sure more money is not wasted in that department."*

— Glen Whitley  
county commissioner



## Fort Worth area

### County sues to reclaim costs of wrecked vehicle

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County has sued former Sheriff's Department spokesman Herb Chambers for wrecking a department car he was not authorized to use.

The county is seeking \$11,238 from Chambers or his insurance carrier, according to the suit. Chambers wrecked the unmarked 1996 Ford Crown Victoria on Oct. 19 on U.S. 377, south of Cresson.

The car hit a telephone pole and crashed into a tree. Chambers was driving to his Hood County home. He blamed his erratic driving on new blood pressure medicine.

Chambers, who left the Sheriff's Department in June, said this week that he was aware of the suit and had retained an attorney but declined to give the attorney's name or comment further.

The car was one of 15 at the center of a dispute last year between Sheriff David Williams and the Commissioners Court about take-home cars.

During budget deliberations, commissioners slashed the cars from Williams' budget and he was told to turn them over. Williams didn't immediately return the cars, and during that time Chambers wrecked the vehicle.



# WANTED: DETENTION OFFICERS

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*The Tarrant County Sheriff's Department is actively recruiting for entry level positions. The following positions are currently open:*

**Technical Officer II - Detention Officer**    **\$1,924.00 per month**

**Duties include:**    Supervision of County Inmates while in a confinement setting. Completes mandatory paperwork relating to care and custody of inmates. Conducts hourly safety and security checks and records results.

**Reception Clerk**    **\$1,720.00 per month**

**Duties include:**    Receives money and prepares property forms for inmates. Works with the public to give information concerning inmate charge information and visitation procedures.

**Booking Clerk**    **\$1,720.00 per month**

**Duties include:**    Enters inmate information into booking system. Performs Agency Update functions. Performs inmate arraignment functions by scheduling inmates for arraignment and reviewing arraignment.

**\*\*\*Each position includes full County benefits includes a .60 cent an hour shift differential pay and a \$32.00 a month uniform allowance.\*\*\***

**Contact a Recruiter TODAY!!!  
Officers Crystal Westerfield and Roger Ruth  
Office: 817-884-1322 / Fax: 817-884-3305**



# FAMILY TIES

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 2000

## Spanish-speaking chaplain hates to leave work for retirement

BY ANABELLE GARAY  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Raul Garcia, the only Spanish-speaking chaplain for inmates at the Tarrant County Jail, is ready to retire after 17 years on the job.

But he has postponed his summer departure because the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth is having trouble finding a replacement.

Garcia, an ordained deacon, says he can't bring himself to leave what he calls "*una gran familia*."

"It's a big family to which we all belong. I include current prisoners and guards in that family," he said.

More than a spiritual leader, Garcia is for many inmates their best, perhaps only, friend.

"It's sad that he would retire," said Jose Garcia, an inmate at the county's Green Bay facility. "I know others in there are happy when he's here," he said, pointing beyond the gray cell bars.

Chaplain Garcia, 66, is the only Roman Catholic chaplain for the Tarrant County Jail, where the inmate population averages 3,400 a day. His mission is not limited to religious ministry. He spends his days translating for and counseling prisoners who speak only Spanish, a population that he said is on the rise.

Hugh Atwell, director of chaplaincy at the jail, praised Garcia, who works for the diocese rather than the official jail ministry known as Faith Restorative Justice Chaplaincy. Garcia's kind demeanor makes others willing to hear his message, Atwell said.

"He exudes love. He has the rare gift of service," he said. "We're going to miss the person of Raul Garcia."

Garcia joined the jail family in 1983, a few months after being ordained a deacon in the Fort Worth diocese. A father of six, he had just been laid off his job assembling aircraft at LTV Corp. in Grand Prairie. He accepted the diocese's offer to work temporarily in the jails.

He found inmates who wanted to form a relationship with God and few chaplains to aid them. He came to realize that many prisoners just wanted someone to listen when they said, "I'm depressed. There's no way out." or, "I've been sentenced."

He decided to stay.

"I worked here too much to leave it," he said. "I don't want our Hispanics and Catholics to be without anyone."

Even though Garcia could now be hunting with his new rifle — a retirement gift from the deputies — or playing with his 12 grandchildren, he still has things he wants to accomplish.

"I'd like to get permission so we could have Communion during Sunday services," he said. For security reasons, the jail does not allow Catholic priests to bring in vessels necessary for Mass, he said.

His influence continues to grow, along with the number of prisoners from Spanish-speaking countries. Although the Sheriff's Department doesn't keep figures on the number of Hispanics behind bars, Garcia estimates that about 200 prisoners who speak only Spanish are spread out among the three jail facilities. Many are illegal immigrants



being detained by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Those prisoners are the ones who need to be counseled and oriented about the jail system in their own language, Garcia said. "The poor prisoners could make mistakes for not knowing the language. They don't know how things are done here."

Giving all prisoners access to religious materials and services is important, said Ralph McCloud, director of the peace and justice ministry for the diocese. Those who don't speak English deserve the same opportunity to practice their religion, he said, and a chaplain who doesn't speak the inmate's language is of little assistance.

"If it needs to be signed or in Spanish, we take the burden of interpreting upon us," he said.

Meeting Chaplain Garcia was the answer to Jose Garcia's prayers, the inmate said in Spanish in a recent interview.

When he was arrested on charges of drunken driving, Jose Garcia, 30, had only been in the United States for three months. The Mexican native spoke no English so he couldn't ask a simple question.

"I was desperate because I have no family here," he said. "I would cry in bed."

When he wanted to see the jail's doctor, he said, he wasn't examined because he could not explain that his mouth was not healing after it was injured in the accident that landed him in jail.

"If we're sick, we have to take it because we can't explain," he said.

Capt. Dave Barrington, a sheriff's spokesman, acknowledges that inmates might end up waiting for routine medical care because of the language barrier and because other prisoners might have more serious health problems.



Although there are bilingual jailers, there is always a need for more Spanish-speaking personnel, Barrington said. And prisoners who speak only Spanish might prefer to explain their needs to the chaplain.

"I think some of that is cultural," he said. "People feel more comfortable communicating with someone of their own culture."

That was the case with Jose Garcia. He prayed for help and managed to get a fellow prisoner to request a Bible for him. The next day, the soft-spoken chaplain arrived.

Since then, Jose Garcia has anticipated the chaplain's weekly visits.

"*El a puesto un granito de arena en mi,*" he said of the chaplain — he has given me a grain of hope.

In his 17 years as a chaplain, Raul Garcia has seen more people become interested in religion. "There's more enthusiasm. People are aspiring to have a Bible and study."

Sometimes he brings good news to the inmates. His face brightened recently after finding out that one man's daughter was doing well after surgery.

"It's good news that will lift his spirits," he said.

Other times, the news he delivers is harsh, about a friend injured in an accident or an inmate's mother dying.

"It's when they most need help," he said.

An inmate can become frustrated, depressed or suicidal when that happens, Garcia explained. If the jailers can't understand an inmate's situation, they may put him in a cell alone to keep him from hurting himself or others, he said.

Jose Garcia is saddened by the chaplain's pending retirement. He doesn't want to face a Wednesday morning when he doesn't see Raul Garcia in his black shirt with clerical collar and black cowboy boots walking by his cell. But if he goes, it's God's will, the inmate said.



# County may reopen Cold Springs jail

Residents apprehensive about housing state inmates

## WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

Under the county's plan, medium-security inmates would be housed in the Cold Springs jail near a residential neighborhood north of downtown.

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County is poised to choose a private company to reopen the vacant Cold Springs Confinement Unit to house state inmates, bringing nearly \$1 million a year into county coffers — and without a word to nearby residents who resisted such a move a year ago.

"We don't want hard-core criminals housed there," said Glenn Spoons, vice chairwoman of the Greenway Neighborhood Development Corp., a group of about 500 residents.

"We still have the same concerns, and we would like to be invited to the table to actually be made aware, if nothing else, of what it is they're going to do and how it could possibly affect the community," Spoons said.

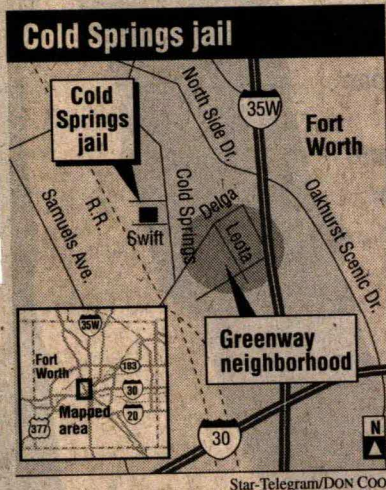
The 384-bed facility north of downtown would house minimum- to medium-security, nonviolent inmates from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. A private company would be in charge of the jail's daily operations.

Of the two bids received, the county appears ready to accept the proposal from Correctional Services Corp., which runs the correctional boot camp in Mansfield, along with 13 other Texas facilities and 57 facilities nationwide.

If the commissioners ratify Correctional Services' bid, the county will contribute roughly \$966,000 each year.

The contract would need renewal every two years.

CiviGenics, the other company competing for the contract, offered the county less money, said Jack Beacham, the county's purchasing agent.



"They're both excellent companies," he said. "It's come down to dollars."

The state prison system, which has an inmate population of about 150,000, leases approximately 3,800 beds from Texas counties to offset overcrowding, TDC spokesman Glen Castlebury said.

Cold Springs has cost the county money to keep it running, roughly \$150,000 last year, said

Gary Kirby, Tarrant's facilities manager.

The facility, an elementary school from the 1950s until it was renovated in the late 1980s, has been vacant since 1995 when it was closed because of low inmate populations.

The Sheriff's Department runs a work-release program out of barracks on the grounds.

Last year, Tarrant County spent \$1.6 million to renovate part of the facility to get it ready to lease.

A few months later, in November, some residents told commissioners that they were worried about escapees.

Spoons said she was not told that the plan — which had been stalled until the county requested bids in June — was back on the table.



Commissioner Dionne Bagsby, whose precinct includes the jail, reminded commissioners a few days ago that they have an obligation to the neighborhood.

"We have, time and time again, said to those people that we are not going to do anything negative to their neighborhood," Bagsby said.

County Judge Tom Vandergriff invited the residents to speak to commissioners during any regularly scheduled Commissioners Court meeting, conducted every Tuesday.

"We always took every precaution to make certain as to the safety of the neighborhood, and I'm sure that would be done again if we do open the facility on some basis," Vandergriff said.

Correctional Services is planning to brief commissioners on its proposal during tomorrow's meeting.

In its 61-page bid proposal, the company said that it would not allow vehicles serving the jail to use residential streets through the neighborhood.

Correctional Services would create a community advisory board, including elected officials and area residents, said Billy Bryan of Belton, the company's vice president.

Spoons called that "a step in the right direction."

"It would give us an avenue to have input," she said.

Correctional Services was started in 1989 in Delaware and went public in 1994. The company is in charge of 11,500 beds and is among the largest jail and prison management companies in the country.

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# Sheriff candidate says opponent botched case

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

## CAMPAIGN 2000

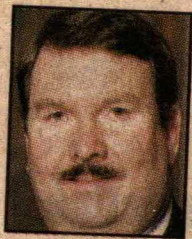
**FORT WORTH** — Democratic sheriff's candidate Luther Perry accused Republican rival Dee Anderson yesterday of making a "critical" and "inexcusable" mistake while investigating a drunken driving fatality 15 years ago.

Perry, a Fort Worth police officer, said that before voters decide who is most capable of becoming Tarrant County's

next top cop, they should consider what he called Anderson's failure to request that the drunken driving suspect take a blood test.

"What?" said a surprised Anderson, when told that Perry was accusing him of botching the old DWI case and suggesting that the case led to his reassign-

(More on CANDIDATES on Page 9B)



Anderson



Perry

ment to a "less responsible role" as Arlington Police Department spokesman.

Anderson denied doing anything wrong in the investigation and accused Perry of political mudslinging.

"This is ridiculous," he said. "I'm sorry he has stooped to this level. I feel the voters will see through this as the desperate attempt that this is."

Perry said Anderson failed to follow correct police procedures, mandated by Texas law, by not ordering a drunken driving suspect to submit to a blood test after a June 10, 1985, collision in Arlington that killed Herbert S. Paloff, a Virginia engineer who was in town on business.

In a plea-bargain deal, Gustavo Cedillo, the principal of a Fort Worth elementary school, was ultimately convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years' probation and 120 days in jail. Cedillo was also ordered to resign from the school district.

Perry said the punishment would have been harsher had Anderson "adhered to state law"

and ordered a blood examination to determine whether Cedillo was drunk at the time of the accident.

"It's incompetence at its best," he said of Anderson, adding: "If he can't be trusted to adhere to state law, then how can he be trusted to run the Sheriff's Department?"

Perry and a campaign worker cited a state law that, according to records with the Texas Law Library in Austin, took effect Jan. 1, 1984. The statute at the time of the accident said a blood test is required, rather than simply offered, when "at the time of the arrest, the officer reasonably believes that a person has died or will die as a direct result of the accident."

But Anderson, recalling an incident that occurred in his fifth year as a police officer, said he is "almost certain" he was not the "primary" investigator at the scene, and was not the one making the

decisions on how to handle the suspect.

"My actions in that was simply acting as the transporting person who took him into the jail and booked him in," he said.



Perry suggested that Anderson's handling of the case led his supervisors to put him in a "less responsible role, or a more controlled role," as police spokesman — a position he still holds.

"He's not in a position where he has to make any commands or decisions. He's in a position where everything he does is scripted," Perry said.

Anderson countered by saying it was "ridiculous" to believe he was made "the most visible person in the entire Arlington Police Department ... because I was incapable of doing my job."

Former Arlington Police Chief David Kunkle, who appointed Anderson spokesman in July 1986, agreed.

Kunkle, who is now Arlington's deputy city manager, said he selected Anderson because he had a "tremendous amount of trust" in him.

"I entrusted Dee with the most difficult of issues," he said. "This is the part of politics that I think is sickening."

Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at Texas Christian University, said he doubts Perry's accusations will have much sway with voters, who on Nov. 7 will pick the replacement for incumbent Sheriff David Williams, who lost in the Republican Primary in March.

"The truth is that the public at large will kind of react to that with kind of a yawn," Riddlesperger said.

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# County approves jail contract

## Company that runs Mansfield jail is chastised

By **KAREN BROOKS**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Problems at the Tarrant County Community Correctional Facility in Mansfield came back yesterday to haunt the private company that runs it.

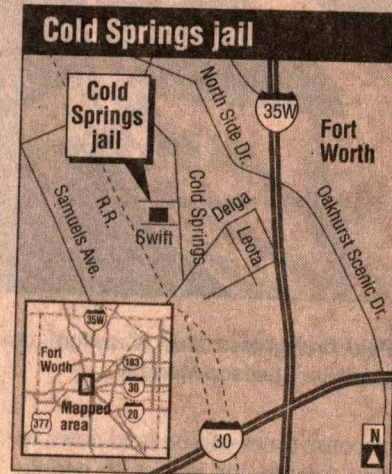
The same company wants to reopen a Fort Worth facility to house state inmates.

Florida-based Correctional Services Corp. won its contract from the county yesterday to open the 384-bed Cold Springs Correctional Facility, but not before commissioners chastised company officials for recent incidents at the Mansfield boot camp, which Correctional Services Corp. has run for about 10 years.

The Mansfield boot camp and drug-abuse treatment facility is under state investigation after allegations of sexual harassment and assault incidents.

In 1994, a guard pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting a female inmate.

And last month, a former maintenance worker pleaded guilty to coercing two female inmates to perform sexual acts; and a former drill instructor is under investigation for



Star-Telegram/DON COOK

having sex with a female inmate in December.

In spite of those incidents, commissioners voted 3-2 yesterday to award the Cold Springs contract to the company, which would use the former schoolhouse just north of downtown Fort Worth to house minimum-and medium-security male state inmates.

The county will get about \$966,000 a year from the company to run the jail.

But two commissioners, Marti VanRavenswaay and Dionne

Bagsby, both of whom voted against awarding the contract, questioned whether the profit is worth the toll exacted on a nearby neighborhood and whether it strong-arms the authority of the next sheriff, who will be elected in November.

"I have a problem with jail facilities being managed by outside companies," said Bagsby, whose district includes Cold Springs.

The Mansfield situation is an example of what can happen, she said.

But Bagsby said she had other reasons to vote against CSC.

Bagsby said she has been looking out for the residents of the Greenway neighborhood near the facility. Residents have voiced concerns about reopening the jail but have said they are confident the commissioners will watch out for their best interests.

Bagsby said the facility could be used for other purposes, such as temporary office space for county employees. The Cold Springs facility, closed in 1995 because of low inmate populations, served its purpose of easing local jail overcrowd-

ing — a need that no longer exists, Bagsby said.

VanRavenswaay voted against allowing the company to take over the facility because such decisions, she said, should be left up to the new sheriff, who will take office in January.

"I want to give the new sheriff a chance to decide how to use the Cold Springs facility," she said.

Before the vote, commissioners asked for reassurances from the company's vice president, Bill Bryan of Waco, that the same problems that plague Mansfield would not occur at Cold Springs.

Bryan said his company is taking steps in that direction, including hiring a new administrator at Mansfield who is "going through that thing with a fine-toothed comb."

"If we have a problem, we fix it," said Bryan, who will be the administrator at Cold Springs. "We stumbled, we'll pick ourselves up and we'll make you proud of us."

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# Jail supervisor fired after internal inquiry

**By KAREN BROOKS**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — A jail supervisor who won a battle late last year against a demotion was fired yesterday after an internal investigation into sexual harassment and records falsification complaints, officials said.

Lt. Ray Grimes, who regained his rank in December, was a supervisor in the county's Green Bay jail unit when the complaints were filed within the past 60 days, said Capt. John Dalton, a Sheriff's Department

spokesman.

Dalton declined to release further details about the investigation or complaints.

Grimes' attorney, David Sloane, said he plans to appeal the termination to the Civil Service Commission. He called the harassment complaints false but declined to give any details.

"Ray Grimes has in no way made any unwanted sexual advances at any employee, ever," he said.

As for what prompted the

records complaint, Sloane said, "We'd like to know ourselves. All he has ever done is ask his subordinates to correct reports when they were wrong."

Grimes, a 10-year veteran of the department, was demoted last year after officials said he wrongly used pepper spray on an inmate. The Civil Service Commission reinstated his rank and awarded him lost wages in return for serving a 15-day suspension without pay.

Another supervisor, Lt. Ron Miller of the personnel department,

has been on paid leave since early August on an unrelated sexual harassment complaint, Dalton said. He declined to provide any details, saying the investigation is ongoing.

Sloane, who also represents Miller, said Miller is the target of retaliation and politics.

Miller had never been the subject of disciplinary action or any such investigation in his years with the department, Sloane said.

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# Empty jailhouse would serve community best as schoolhouse

**B**ob Ray Sanders is right. That sentence does not appear in this space often. This time, he's absolutely right. Our county commissioners are wrong.

What are they thinking?

A state prison does not belong next to a residential neighborhood.

I know what the commissioners think. They think a rent check for nearly \$1 million a year looks bet-

ter than an empty building. They think it's time to rent out an abandoned county jailhouse near downtown Fort Worth.

That empty jailhouse should never reopen. It was converted from a school to an emergency overflow jail during seven of the worst crime years, 1988 to 1995. Originally, it was an elementary school serving a north side neigh-

(More on KENNEDY on Page 10B)



**BUD  
KENNEDY**

COMMENTARY

► Jon McConal  
column. 3B

borhood.

To my friends in Arlington, Southlake, Hurst and all the eastern Tarrant County cities that control Tarrant County government: What if somebody tried to turn *your* former neighborhood school into a state prison?

You wouldn't like it.

Neither do the powerless residents of Fort Worth's oldest neighborhood, along the neglected streets near Samuels Avenue and the empty Cold Springs Correctional Facility.

"This would be devastating to that neighborhood," said Fort Worth Mayor Pro Tem Ralph McCloud.

He represents the nine-block Greenway neighborhood and the century-old Rock Island area, where low-income and elderly residents live in modest homes on land where cattle drives once tramped out the path to the Chisholm Trail.

"That is a very history-rich and proud neighborhood which has grown isolated," he said. "Families have lived there three generations. The revitalization is beginning." The city has already lined up a \$1.2 million federal grant, he said.

McCloud had a blunt request for County Judge Tom Vandergriff of Arlington and Commissioners J.D. Johnson of northwest

Fort Worth and Glen Whitley of Hurst, and for the for-profit Florida company proposing to open a state prison.

"Look some other place," he said.

If Vandergriff, Johnson and Whitley think the county needs to unload an empty building, here's a better solution:

Sell it back to the Fort Worth school district. Sell it back in exchange for the county's investment, so it can once again be filled with the children of north Fort Worth.

County taxpayers pulled off a coup to buy the school. With the city school population dwindling and the county jail overflowing, the county bought the former Ruby Williamson Center, once an

elementary school and then a high school for pregnant girls.

Williamson was the neighborhood elementary school principal from 1926 to 1951. When the April 1949 Trinity River flood drowned her school, she went door to door asking for furniture and books to reopen classes and restock the library.

In 1985, county taxpayers bought the school for a bargain \$375,000. Another \$2 million-plus has been spent to expand the building and tighten security.

"It would be an ideal central location for an alternative school," said Eldon Ray, a Fort Worth school district associate superintendent. "We have filled up every empty building we ever had. We need more space somewhere." In the past three years, the district has spent as much as \$6 million each year to remodel and reopen four abandoned schools.

School board President Gary J. Manny was gone for the weekend, so I could not ask him. Trustee Rose Herrera, who represents the north side, did not return a call.

The residents of the near north side don't deserve a neighborhood state prison.

Give them back a school.



the  
**INSIDER**  
report

## Police get aid in pursuit from sheriff

Far from the rigors of politics and controversy, Tarrant County Sheriff **David Williams** joined forces with Fort Worth police on Aug. 27 to catch a derelict driver on a "monster" motorcycle. City Officer **Mike Lilly** said that police attempted to stop the man after spotting him and several other motorcyclists racing near Texas Motor Speedway.

But the Kawasaki was too powerful for the PD's "clunky Crown Vics," and the officers quickly lost sight of their suspect, Lilly said.

Then Williams, dressed in his Sunday clothes and traveling in an unmarked Chevy Caprice, used his patrol radio to tell the officers that he had the fleeing motorist in sight. Using the information given by Williams, "we started moving in," this time with the help of a police helicopter, Lilly said.

The sheriff, who continues to bicker with county commissioners despite his losing bid for a third term, has not had a very good year. But that day, Lilly said, "he did us a real nice favor; he did a good job."

■



# Operator of jail 'banana wagon' gives back little, figures reveal

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — On any given morning, workers push 400-pound, four-wheeled metal carts through the Tarrant County Jail, peddling soaps, aspirin, candy and other merchandise to prisoners.

The carts, and the people who push them, are part of the jail's

commissary, known as the "banana wagon." It is a privately owned, multimillion-dollar enterprise that, as with all jail commissaries in Texas, is required by state law to put part of the profits into an inmate welfare fund. Purchases are made by scanning bar codes on prisoners' wristbands, enabling the commissary to with-

draw money from individual accounts set up by the inmates or their families.

The banana wagon is one of the busiest jail commissaries in the state, yet it pays the Tarrant County Jail one of the smallest commissions, according to records obtained by the *Star-Telegram*.

The *Star-Telegram's* findings provoked concern among Tarrant County commissioners who say they have long been frustrated in their efforts to find more effective ways to manage the commissary.

"As a financial person, I think there's quite a bit of additional funds that could be there for the county if we had the right financial arrangement," County Auditor Rene Tidwell said.

County Judge Tom Vandergriff said that one of his top priorities during the upcoming session of the Legislature will be to push for changes in state law that gives sheriffs exclusive control of commissaries. Local government leaders,

County commissioners say they were not aware of how little of the revenue the jail realizes and have begun to search for ways to recoup more of the profits.

Of the more than \$10 million in gross sales rung up by the commissary from fiscal year 1996 through the first seven months of this fiscal year, \$360,388, or 3.54 percent, was returned to the Sheriff's Department inmate welfare fund.

The rest of the money, after overhead costs, went to the vendor, Mid States Services, a Dallas company that keeps its financial books closed to Tarrant County auditors and the public.

The company also refused to allow the *Star-Telegram* to photograph commissary operations, review its contract with the jail or disclose its inventory and the prices that it charges to prisoners, arguing that such information is confidential and release of it would benefit competitors.

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams, through a staff member, declined to comment on his deal with Mid States, which is spelled out in a simple, three-page contract that the sheriff negotiates.

Mid States board Chairman John Sammons, the only company official who agreed to an interview, questioned the accuracy of the *Star-Telegram's* findings, saying that the records "are just a bunch of numbers that don't mean anything."

Sammons added: "I feel we provide a quality product at a fair price."

not just the sheriff, should have the authority to "conserve as much income for the county and the jail system as we can," Vandergriff said.

On Tuesday, for example, county commissioners will be told that Williams plans to take more than \$2,000 out of the commissary fund to buy paperback Bibles for prisoners — six copies of the King James version and 400 of the New International translation.

The "banana wagon" began in 1961 when Sheriff Lon Evans launched the operation as a personal business. Evans walked the

halls of the jail, selling soap, shaving cream and snacks to prisoners from banana boxes.

In the late '80s, Sheriff Don Carpenter contracted with Mid States to operate the commissary, which has become popular among inmates, most of whom are not impressed with the jail's daily meals, which are served about 5 a.m., 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The commissary offers "a little more of the type of food that you snack on in the free world," former inmate Natividad Valle said.

Williams, who lost his bid for a third term as sheriff and will leave office at the end of the year, wants to replace Mid States with a new commissary vendor who has agreed to pay a slightly larger commission. But the county has filed a lawsuit to stop him, arguing that such a move should be made by the new sheriff, who will be elected Nov. 7.

Jack Madera, founder of Mid States, did not return repeated telephone calls regarding either the lawsuit or his long relationship with the Sheriff's Department. Larry Hanson, Madera's son-in-law and the president of the company's jail commissary division, declined to comment.

Madera, 72, sold Mid States about a year ago to a group of investors. The majority owners of the business are Hanson and Sammons, a businessman from Temple.

Sammons, who questioned the accuracy of the *Star-Telegram's* findings, said the records released by some of the other county jails may not include "hidden costs," such as wages and benefits of the commissaries' staffs.

Sammons also said that he suspects that other jail commissaries may charge more for their goods, creating more revenue for government coffers.

Jail commissaries generate much



more money for the local governments of Harris, Bexar and Travis counties, according to the *Star-Telegram's* findings. In Dallas County, where the jail commissary is run by Mid States, the profit ratio is about the same as in Tarrant, the records show.

Tarrant County's jail commissary generated more than \$2.27 million in gross sales last fiscal year, records show. Of that, Mid States returned 3.56 percent, or \$81,307, to the jail.

During the same period, the Travis County Jail's commissary in Austin generated less in gross sales, \$992,269, but set aside much more for prisoners, \$238,069, or 24 percent of the gross revenue.

In Harris County last year, officials deposited \$1.7 million in an inmate-welfare account, 38.6 percent of the jail commissary's \$4.4 million in gross sales.

"We essentially spend it all for the inmates," said Capt. Don McWilliams of the Harris County Sheriff's Department. "We also think it's the reasonable thing to do to offset the cost of inmate recreational activities and other programs by using their own money, rather than using taxpayers' money," McWilliams said.

When told that Mid States pays less than 4 percent in commission fees to operate the jail commissary in Tarrant County, Capt. John Hart, head of the jail commissary in Harris County, said: "They're making out like bandits."

Records show that in Bexar County last year, the jail commissary had \$1.53 million in sales — more than \$740,000 less than Tarrant County's total. Yet, Bexar County sheriff's officials were able to set aside \$209,905 for inmates, almost 2½ times the amount set aside for Tarrant County prisoners in the same period, according to the figures.

Government officials in Travis and Bexar counties said their numbers include salaries, benefits and other overhead costs. McWilliams said he is not certain whether the records for the Harris County Jail commissary include wages and benefits.

The Tarrant County commissary has 12 employees, costing Mid States about \$225,000 a year in wages and benefits, Sammons said.

Savala Swanson, chief deputy over the Tarrant County Jail, said he could not allow pictures to be taken of the commissary because "it's not our property," even though it is located in, and profits from, a government facility.

Asked about the price of commissary goods, Swanson said his office conducted a study several years ago that indicated that the prices were comparable to what other jail commissaries charge, including those in Bexar and Travis counties. "Some items were lower, some items were a few cents higher," he said.

The study, Swanson said, did not examine the commissary in the Harris County Jail.

Sammons said his company offers the most efficient and streamlined jail commissary service in Texas, with operations not only in Tarrant and Dallas counties but also in 30 other jails in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma.

"We must be making fair-minded deals. Otherwise, why would people be doing business with us?" he asked.

Officials in Corpus Christi determined last year that the Nueces County Jail commissary was losing about \$30,000 a year under Mid States' management, said Dale Atchley, a spokesman for the county auditor's office. The sheriff's department renegotiated its contract after the company agreed to increase its commission to the county from \$37,000 a year to "now over \$95,000," Atchley said.

Mid States is not attempting to rip anyone off, Sammons said. "We're not making a killing. We're not making out like bandits. We're simply making a fair return on our investment," he said.

Among large county jails in Texas, only at the Dallas County Jail were the records similar to those in Tarrant County. Mid States, after generating \$5.39 million last year in gross sales, deposited \$213,301, or 3.9 percent of sales, in an account for the prisoners, according to records obtained through an open records request.

In Travis and Harris counties, the commissaries are operated in-house by their respective sheriff's departments rather than through an outside company.



Travis County Sheriff Margo Frasier said she considered switching to a private company last year and briefly turned over her commissary to Mid States for a trial run.

"They ran a very good operation and offered a good product to the inmates at a cost that was comparable to what you see in this business," Frasier said. "It was just that I found, after looking at it, that I could make more money for the inmate welfare fund by running it myself," she said.

Asked about Mid States' business arrangement with Tarrant County, Frasier said: "It's not a deal I would take."

In Bexar County, the jail commissary is run by a ministry group,

whose board of directors works closely with government officials, said County Auditor Dan Johnson.

He said government leaders know exactly how much the commissary is making because ministry officials "submit to us a certified audit after each year. ... The records have to be available to us."

The books are also audited in Harris and Travis counties.

However, in Fort Worth and Dallas one can only guess how profitable the jail commissaries are because, as a private company, Mid States' records are not completely open for government scrutiny, officials in both counties said.

Tidwell, the Tarrant County auditor, said she once asked Madera to look at Mid States' financial records, concerning only its work with the Tarrant County jail commissary. "The general gist," she said of the response she received, "was why would I want to look at them.

"It was never clear on whether I would be granted access. I never showed up at his door," Tidwell said.

Although she has never been able to audit Mid States' commissary operation, Tidwell said she suspects it makes a "huge profit."

Sammons said he would not allow Tarrant County to audit his company because it would be a governmental intrusion into a private enterprise much like, he said, if the government attempted to examine the financial books of Ford Motor Co.

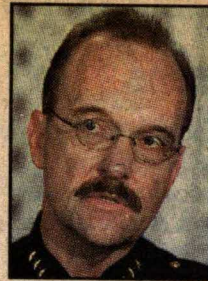
Pct. 3 County Commissioner Glen Whitley agreed, saying, "I don't know that I see that as any of our business. ... I don't think the government has the right to have access to a private business's books."

But Pct. 2 County Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay sees it differently. She said Mid States, unlike Ford, is an "outsourced" arm of Tarrant County government, making money directly from a governmental function: the incarceration of people charged with a crime.

"I think the more that we are able to audit and the more accountable we are to the public, the better government we are able to provide," VanRavenswaay said,

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700

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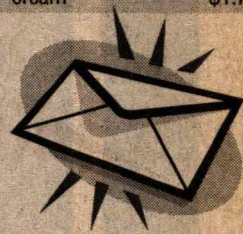
**Tarrant Sheriff**  
David Williams, whose term expires in December, wants to hire a new commissary vendor.

## Shopping the commissary

Prisoners at Tarrant County Jail can select from more than 90 items when they purchase goods from the commissary. Here's a sampling of what's in stock (the sizes of the products were not disclosed) and the costs:

Broth	.11	Stamped envelopes	.40	Crawford shave cream	\$1.79
Hot chocolate	.27	Ink pens	.43		
Chick-O-Stick	.27	Legal tablet-short	.92		
Club crackers	\$1.08	Legal folders	\$2.17		
		Walkman radio	\$13.20		
		Batteries	\$2.17		
		Immersion heater	\$4.87		
		Cracklings	\$1.00		
		Pickles - small	.43		
		Plastic spoons	.05		
		Afro picks	.60	Mennen Speed Stick	\$2.11
		Cough drops	.60	Hair rollers	\$2.17
		Soap - Ivory	.65	Playing cards	\$2.71
		Tums	.70	Dandruff shampoo	\$1.62
		Aspirin	.54	Efferdent	\$2.71
Chips/popcorn	.54	Toothbrush	.92	Super Poly Grip	\$4.06
Sugar wafers	.38	Toothpaste - small	.97	Anti-fungal cream	\$4.28
Instant Lunch	.92	Chapstick	.97	Tide detergent	.54
Beef sticks	\$1.08	Primatene Mist 18	.13	Lady Speed Stick	\$2.71
Chess & checkers	\$6.06				

SOURCE: Tarrant County Jail





# OPINIONS

Star-Telegram

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2000

## Crack down on jaywalkers

During the many years that I have lived in Fort Worth, I have never ceased to be amazed at the total disregard by pedestrians for traffic signals. Not only do they risk serious injury by crossing against red lights, but they wander across busy streets in midblock, virtually daring motorists to hit them.

About 3 p.m. Aug. 23, I witnessed one of the most brazen jaywalking groups that I have ever seen. These people nonchalantly walked across West Weatherford Street in midblock, at the county corrections building, despite the fact that lights were green for motorists proceeding east. Traffic had to stop for these people, since

each was wearing the blue uniform of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department.

Some in the group had the integrity to proceed west to the next intersection, but the faces on the jaywalkers indicated that they knew exactly what they were doing and really didn't care that their behavior set the worst possible example for citizens.

It is my understanding that there are laws against jaywalking that for some reason have never been enforced. It's about time this was done.

L.R. Klein Jr.  
Fort Worth



■ **LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2000

**Going back 15 years**

Once again, someone seeking office on the Tarrant County Democratic ticket has reminded me why the county has become increasing Republican over the years. This time it's Luther Perry, candidate for sheriff, who brings it home to me.

Perry has entered the important debate about issues facing the new sheriff by accusing his opponent, Dee Anderson, of not following police department policy 15 years ago. Yes, you heard correctly: 15 years ago! This compelling discovery is what Perry offers up as to why he should be our sheriff.

With all due respect, I think that Perry's type of campaigning detracts from the debate over the core issues. I would also suggest that there are far more important things to talk about than what Anderson was doing 15 years ago as a young police officer.

I believe that we should stick to exploring the policy matters that affect the county and the good operation of the Sheriff's Department. The men and women who work there deserve it, and so do the taxpayers.

**Ray Mattix**  
*Fort Worth*



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2000

# County plans to raise jailers' starting salary

Officials hope the increase will help in the filling of vacancies.

By KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Bemoaning the high turnover and poor recruitment rates of Tarrant County jailers, commissioners decided yesterday to raise the jailers' starting salaries by 14 percent.

If the new pay allows the Sheriff's Department to fill the vacancies it has in its jails, the county could stave off future overtime costs, boost recruitment and reduce stress, encouraging employees to stay with the jail longer, budget officials said.

The worst-case scenario is that if the new pay levels don't do anything for recruitment, the cost to the county would be \$437,924

next year, not including a repeat of the more than a half-million dollars in additional, beyond-budget overtime the Sheriff's Department incurred last year, according to budget estimates.

The changes will go into effect Nov. 1.

Starting salaries for jailers will increase from \$23,088 to \$26,404. The increase will also allow jailers to reach their maximum annual pay of \$34,140 in 5 1/2 years instead of nine years, vital for encouraging employees to stay with the department, Chief Deputy Hank Pope said.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction," Pope said. "I think it's going to boost morale. ... We're concerned about the employees that are already on staff, but we think by obtaining and filling all the positions, that's going to be a help to them."

The overtime issue is testy with commissioners this year. The overtime bill at the Sheriff's Department — due in part to Y2K but also a result of staff shortages — was the main con-

tributor to a \$270,000 shortfall on its \$59.2 million budget this year.

Employees who are making below the new starting rate will be brought into line with that level of pay, commissioners said.

Along with those increases, commissioners agreed to add a nickel to the hourly pay of jailers who work evening and overnight shifts. Those employees currently get 60 cents more an hour than the day shift as compensation for working off-hours.

The raises will be formally ratified along with the county budget in two weeks. The increases will lift jailers above barbers, bus drivers and washing machine repairmen in average pay, according to figures from the Texas Workforce Commission.

Commissioners decided to increase pay to raise the spirits among employees they said are some of the lowest paid in the department but have some of the county's most high-stress and high-risk jobs. Roughly 3,500 inmates are housed in the county's jails.

All sheriff's employees received 3 percent to 8 percent raises last year, and 4 percent to 10 percent the year before, but that didn't significantly affect the starting salaries.

"I'd like to see us do this," County Judge Tom Vandergriff said. "I'd like to see us go the extra mile."

Jailers and their support staff sit in a jail eight hours or more a day and work with people "at their absolute worst," Pope said.

"Generally, they [the inmates] are self-absorbed and just don't have much regard for the rights or feelings of other people," Pope said. "You get bodily waste thrown on you. You get violent, abuse language. You're subject to assaultive behavior."

Although some people may enjoy working in the jail their entire careers, Pope said, others view it as a way to break into peace officer work. Low pay with such conditions — not including the overtime most are forced to work because of the staffing shortage — encourages them to pay their dues elsewhere, which reinforces the problem, Pope said.

Of the 651 positions the Sheriff's Department has in its jails, 53 are vacant, Pope said.

The department has lost more than 300 employees this year, county officials said.

Karen Brooks, (817) 390-7752  
kbrooks@star-telegram.com



FRIDAY  
September 8, 2000

# Auction to offer cars, equipment

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — The sheriff wanted them, but the county didn't want him to have them.

Now, maybe you'd like to drive one.

Some of the Crown Victorias that were at the center of a fight between Tarrant County commissioners and Sheriff David Williams last year will be on the auction block — along with hundreds of other vehicles — in the Texas Joint Metroplex Auction today at the Arlington Convention Center.

"You'd be one of the elite few who have ever driven one," said Jack Beacham, Tarrant County purchaser.

The annual auction, considered one of the biggest of its kind in the country, is a way for Metroplex governmental agencies to get a little cash for their extra Corvettes.

A little moolah for their Mercedes; a little bonus for their back-hoes.

There are police cars that are less than 2 years old; pickups, compact and family cars; flatmowers; a couple of jet skis; a street sweeper; a dump truck or two; tractors and asphalt pavers.

There's a Porsche and a Mercedes Benz, confiscated by local drug agents, and construction equipment from Tarrant County.

There's even a garbage truck with a side loader.

## Auction plans

WHAT: Texas Joint Metroplex Auction

WHEN: Today

Equipment auction starts at 4 p.m.

Vehicle auction starts at 6 p.m.

Bids/registration starts at noon.

WHERE: Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way.

MORE INFO: Open to the general public. \$500 deposit for cash bidders. No credit cards.

CALL: City of Arlington, (817) 456-6336

One year, one of the cars confiscated from a drug dealer was almost sold with \$4,000 wrapped in a towel and hidden inside it.

"Last year, there was a real nice red Chevelle Convertible, all restored, with chrome on the engine," said Bill Underwood, purchaser for the city of Arlington. "There's some real nice stuff; and there's some stuff you kind of wonder about."

Once, someone auctioned a

lowrider car, complete with hydraulics that made it bounce up and down.

"There are lots of fire engines if anybody wants to pump some water out of their stock pond or something," Underwood said with a chuckle.

And then there are the Ford Crown Victorias — just one point of contention between Williams, who wanted them for his department, and Tarrant County commissioners, who cut about 15 of them out of Williams' budget last year.

The auction, officially hosted by the city of Arlington, includes the following governmental bodies: Arlington, Tarrant County, Mental Health Mental Retardation of Tarrant County, Tarrant County Narcotics Intelligence and Coordination Unit; Mansfield; Marshall; Highland Park; Dallas County Utility and Reclamation District; Burleson; University Park and Grand Prairie.

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Star-Telegram/RON T. ENNIS

**Tarrant County Sheriff's Department vehicles** are among items to be auctioned off today at the Arlington Convention Center.



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2000

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

### Renewing a community

The reopening of the Cold Springs Jail, housing medium-security inmates and being managed by a private company, is a concern for the Greenway community — a small, isolated residential area in Fort Worth.

Many of our residents can remember when the community was one of pride and beauty. Some have been residents for more than 40 years, having paid a \$150 down payment for a brand-new home with shining hardwood floors.

We are committed to reclaiming, restoring, rebuilding and revitalizing our community. As the Model Blocks XI community and the recipient of \$1.2 million, we realize that all is not lost, and we have an increased faith in our ability to return our neighborhood to what it once was.

We are wrestling against principalities and power, but we are not powerless!

The company that was awarded the contract by a 3-2 vote by the Tarrant County commissioners has offered to form an advisory committee that will include representatives from the community. We do have a voice, we want to be heard, and we expect to be heard.

We invite you to join us Sept. 23 in Delga Park to celebrate and kick off the \$1.2 million Model Blocks XI.

**Glenn Spoons**  
*Fort Worth*



# Anderson misses minority -sponsored forum



Star-Telegram/RODGER MALLISON

**Luther Perry**, left, Democratic candidate for sheriff, speaks to the weekly Minority Leaders and Citizens Council as Estrus Tucker, council president, relays questions from the audience.

## His challenger for sheriff, Luther Perry, says he will debate anywhere.

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Taking a cue from the presidential race, candidates for Tarrant County sheriff began debating on when to debate yesterday after one of them did not attend a forum sponsored by minority community leaders.

"Wherever you are, I hope you're listening," Democrat Luther Perry said, challenging Republican rival Dee Anderson in a speech recorded for radio and cable television.

"I'll debate you anywhere," Perry said. "I'll debate you at your home, and you can call all your friends over."

Anderson, who is spokesman for the Arlington Police Department, said he was too busy to attend because of a break in a high-profile murder case.

"We've had a lot of work to do around here," he said, referring to the recent arrest of a suspect in the 1996 "bathtub" slayings of two women.

Anderson said he was not

(More on DEBATE on Page 6B)

attempting to duck a face-to-face debate with Perry, a Fort Worth police officer, and noted that the two of them were on the "same stage" during the primary campaign.

"We will be again, I'm sure," Anderson said. "If the time is right, I'll certainly do that."

Perry spoke at Wednesday's forum at Community Christian

Church in southeast Fort Worth.

"It is unfortunate my opponent is not here," Perry said, sitting next to an empty chair reserved for Anderson.

Anderson said he did not learn of the debate until "late last week [and] I was already booked."

He also said that he attended a political forum at the church before the primaries.

Estrus Tucker, president of the Minority Leaders and Citizens Council, which sponsored the forum, said that in the past two weeks he left four phone messages for Anderson, inviting him to par-



# DEBATE

ticipate in the forum to highlight the sheriff's race.

Anderson never replied, Tucker said.

"I'm assuming Dee Anderson had a conflict in his schedule," he said after the hour-long forum.

Tucker added, however, that Anderson "had plenty of opportunities to call and say he had a conflict. ... I think we deserve that courtesy."

Anderson responded: "I'm sorry about that. It was not an intentional oversight."

Anderson acknowledged that he did not feel as compelled to attend

a non-Republican function.

"Obviously, I'm targeting more toward talking to Republican groups ... That's a much broader base of support for me," he said.

Tucker and Perry called the forum a nonpartisan event, despite Perry's role as a board member of the Minority Leaders and Citizens Council. Tucker also described Perry as a "courageous" candidate.

"We have a reputation for being very courteous and respectful to a diversity of opinions," Tucker said.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700

[jld@star-telegram.com](mailto:jld@star-telegram.com)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2000

## Plans for sheriff debate changed

### Candidates will speak, not face off

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — A deputy sheriffs association has changed its plans to sponsor a debate between Tarrant County sheriff candidates Luther Perry and Dee Anderson after Anderson expressed concerns that the format would be unwise in front of "potential employees."

Rather than a face-to-face debate, Anderson and Perry are scheduled to speak separately next Tuesday night to members of the Tarrant County Deputy Sheriffs Association.

Ron Blair, president of the 300-member group, said the debate was changed to separate one-hour speaking engagements at the request of Anderson, a Republican and the spokesman for the Arlington Police Department.

Blair said Anderson told him that separate appearances would be "more cordial and friendly" and was needed "because of things Luther Perry had said in the past."

Anderson said Monday that he is not attempting to duck a debate with his Democratic opponent.

"I just felt that a debate in front of potential employees is not a good idea. I've seen it happen before: You end up trying to one-up each other. It just kind of becomes a bidding war," Anderson said.

(More on DEBATE on Page 7B)



son said.

Perry, who is a Fort Worth police officer, said he and Anderson should meet with the sheriff's deputies at the same time. "That takes away the ability for him to duck and blow off whatever I'm saying," he said.

Perry also said it was "ironic" that the format was changed a day after he was quoted in the *Star-Telegram* as accusing Anderson of botching the investigation of a fatal DWI accident 15 years ago.



Anderson



Perry

Anderson has described Perry's accusations concerning the investigation as baseless and a desperate act of political mudslinging. He said Monday, however, that Perry's comments about the DWI accident did not play a part in his request to change next week's speaking format.

Anderson said he and Perry have met once in a debate since

the March 14 primary, and that he expects further such meetings. "I would certainly not shy away from that," he said.

Perry said he would meet with Anderson "anywhere" after Anderson missed a debate last week that was sponsored by the Minority Leaders and Citizens Council.

Blair said he expects as many as 80 deputies to attend next Tuesday's event at the Hurst Police Officers Association's meeting hall at 305 E. Hurst Blvd. Perry will appear from 7 to 8 p.m., followed by Anderson, from 8 to 9 p.m., Blair said.

Jack Douglas Jr., (817) 390-7700

[jld@star-telegram.com](mailto:jld@star-telegram.com)



# Inmate dies after falling from top bunk

By **KAREN BROOKS**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — An inmate at the Tarrant County Jail in Fort Worth died yesterday after diving or falling headfirst off his top bunk and landing on the concrete floor, officials said.

Aaron Stevenson, 25, had been booked Monday on burglary charges, said Capt. Dave Barrington, a Sheriff's Department spokesman.

Stevenson died at John Peter Smith Hospital shortly after plunging from his bunk about 2 p.m. yesterday.

The incident is under investigation, but officials said they believe that Stevenson fell intentionally. He was not on suicide watch, Barrington said.

"The person was tangled up in some bedding. He appeared to have tied it intentionally around his waist," Barrington said. "For what purpose, I don't know. ... It is really unfortunate."

Chief Deputy Savala Swanson, who oversees confinement for the Sheriff's Department, referred questions to Barrington. Sheriff David Williams could not be reached to comment.

Stevenson was in a cellblock of 62 prisoners, Barrington said. A day room is in the center of the cellblock and ringed with two floors of cells, each of which has bunk beds and windows looking out into the day room.

The inmates were not locked in their cells at the time and were being allowed to spend time in the day room or in the gym, he said.

About 2 p.m., a jailer walked through the cellblock and checked the rooms, reporting that nothing was unusual.

"At 2:07 p.m., an inmate came up to the officer that was at the desk and said, 'You need to go check this room. I think somebody has hung himself,'" Barrington said.

Karen Brooks, (817) 390-7752  
kbrooks@star-telegram.com

# OBITUARIES

## Tommie B Byrnes



**ARLINGTON** — Tommie B Byrnes, 48, a peace officer, died Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2000, at Arlington.

**Funeral:** 2 p.m. Saturday at Emerald Hills Funeral Home Chapel. **Burial:** Emerald Hills Memorial Park. **Visitation:** 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Emerald Hills Funeral Home; the family will receive friends 6 to 8 p.m. Friday at the funeral home.

Tommie Byrnes was born Oct. 8, 1951, in Fort Worth. She brought joy to those that knew her and had a smile for everyone.

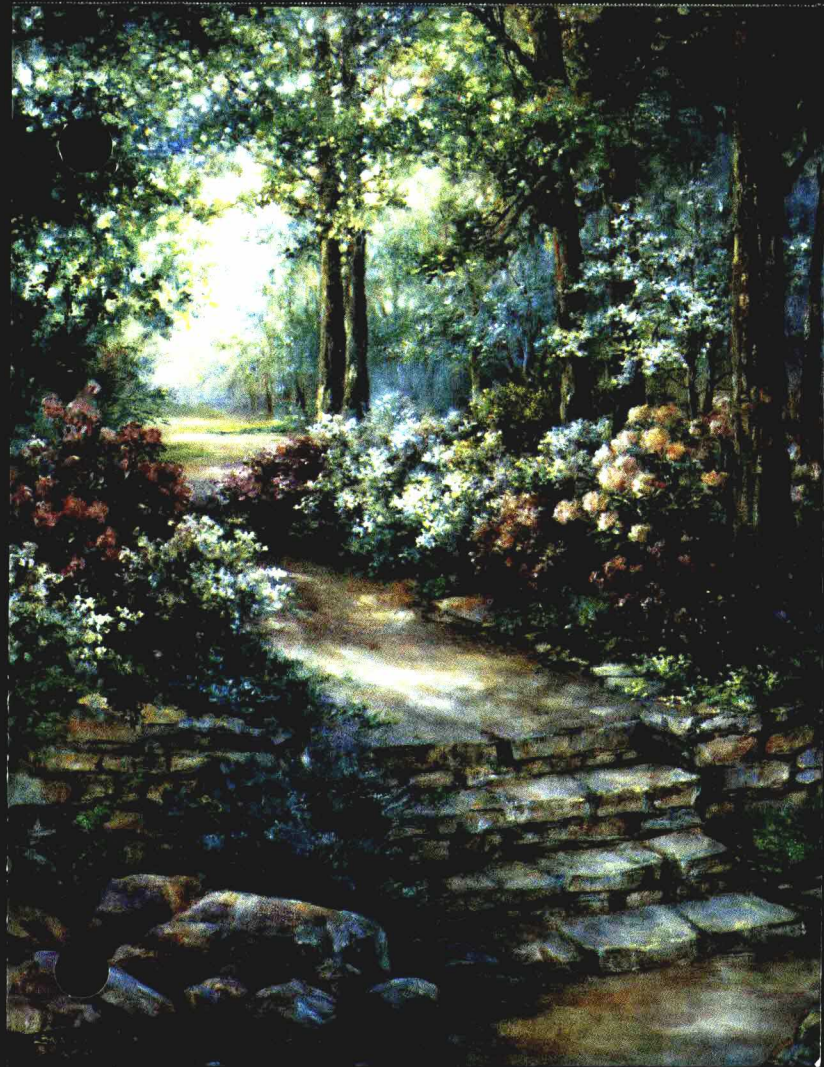
She was a loving and caring wife and mother who gave unconditionally. She was a licensed peace officer and served the people of Tarrant County as a deputy sheriff until she retired due to her disability. Everyone that knew her will miss her. As a mother, she was uplifting and encouraging. Her soft sweet voice and loving ears will guide her sons throughout the rest of their lives. She has gifted them with love and understanding that will be passed down to future genera-

tions. She built a life based on love and compassion. God bless her soul. She will be with us for the rest of our lives until we can join her again in God's kingdom. We dedicate our lives to loving her.

**Survivors:** Husband, Pat Byrnes of Fort Worth; sons and daughter-in-law, Christopher Jones and wife, Kylie, Jeremy Jones and Paul Williams of Fort Worth; stepsons; Paul Rauwolf and wife of Bartlett, Tenn., and David Rauwolf of Ketchikan, Alaska; father and stepmother, Thomas and Bessie Caudle of Seagoville; sister, Ann Seely of Clifton; granddaughter, Brianna Jones; and two stepgrandsons.

Emerald Hills Funeral Home  
Kennedale, (817) 572-1681







*I will not ask you to weep  
Only to remember I do not sleep  
No pain, no sorrow do I now see  
I am with God now, alive and free.*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

*Tommy B. Byrnes*

BORN

October 8, 1951  
Fort Worth, Texas

ENTERED INTO REST

September 20, 2000  
Arlington, Texas

SERVICES

Saturday, September 23, 2000 at 2:00 PM  
Emerald Hills Chapel

OFFICIATING

Rev. Bobbie Cox

INTERMENT

Emerald Hills Memorial Park  
Kennedale, Texas

EMERALD HILLS FUNERAL HOME



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■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

### Too busy?

According to the Sept. 14 *Star-Telegram*, Dee Anderson was either too busy at work to attend the Tarrant County sheriff candidates' debate before the Minority Leaders and Citizens Council or he "was already booked."

I'm surprised that Anderson would make such contradictory statements. After all, his main law enforcement experience has been as spokesman for the Arlington Police Department.

Anderson further stated that his not returning the council president's calls was "not an intentional oversight" (whatever that is). I agree with the president: They deserved the courtesy of a reply, even if Anderson is "targeting more toward talking to Republican groups."

Evidently, Anderson assumes that all minorities will vote Democratic. With this attitude, the election of Anderson as sheriff does not bode well for minorities or anyone else he thinks is not a Republican. I hope all fair-minded Republicans, Democrats and independents will keep that in mind when they vote for sheriff.

I encourage all voters in Tarrant County to support Luther Perry for sheriff in the November election. By doing so, we can have a sheriff with 25 years of actual law enforcement experience who will treat all residents equally, regardless of political affiliation.

**Jo-Ann Zimmerman**  
*Eules*



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2000

Democratic sheriff's candidate **Luther Perry** says he's going to retire from his current job before waiting to see if he wins a new one. Perry, a 25-year veteran officer with the Fort Worth Police Department, said his last day is Friday. Retirement, he said, will give him a chance to "knock on as many doors as I can" before facing Republican rival **Dee Anderson** in the Nov. 7 general elections.

And what if Perry loses? "I'll probably take a year or so off to spend time with my family and do some things I want to do," he said. After that, Perry said, "I've got a lot of other options" for employment.





Star-Telegram/JOYCE MARSHALL

**Great-aunt Lois Gray** had been more like a grandmother to Eric and Alisha. She wanted to adopt the children but couldn't afford to take full responsibility for them.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2000

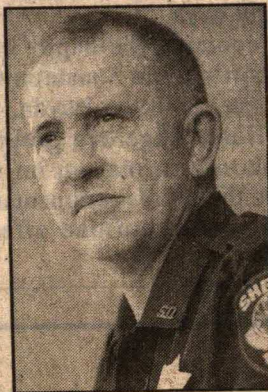
**T**arrant County Sheriff's Deputy Mike Coursey didn't keep in touch with the people he'd dealt with on police calls, but Eric had latched on to him.

Coursey had responded to the Watkins' home in September on a domestic violence call after Jimmy threatened to kill himself in front of the family.

Right after that, Eric's family coincidentally joined Coursey's church. Even before the shooting, every time Eric saw him, he ran to Coursey for a hug.

Coursey was Eric's newfound hero, and although Coursey didn't really understand why, he wasn't about to disappoint the 10-year-old.

After the shooting, Coursey told the



**Eric's hero**, Tarrant County Sheriff's Deputy Mike Coursey, would drive the boy to church and answer his chilling questions.

church pastor that he and his wife would adopt Eric and Alisha if need be. And since Eric's great-aunts didn't drive, Coursey swung by Eric's house often to see if he needed a ride to church.

One Sunday in February 1999, as Coursey was pulling out of the driveway of Eric's home, Eric asked him how to get bloodstains out of carpet.

Hydrogen peroxide, Coursey responded hesitantly.

Then Eric wanted to know about the numbers that had at one time been written in felt-tip pen on the kitchen floor.

Those marked where the shell casings were found, Coursey told him, hoping the subject would change.

Eric wanted to talk about the shooting, all the time. He wanted to know details, he wanted to tell Coursey what he saw, over and over and over.

Coursey didn't know what to say.

He called Jana, who he'd heard was Eric's school counselor.

"He's more comfortable talking about it than I am," Coursey told Jana.

Eric is purging, Jana explained. He's trying to get the trauma out of his system, and he thinks talking about it will erase the pain.

Grief had stolen the color from Eric's face, the sparkle from his eyes. He looked almost limp, as if the weight of the trauma had taken his strength to stand.



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2000

# County jailers working mandatory overtime

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — In the wake of an uproar over the overtime costs in the Sheriff's Department and in the shadow of critical staff shortages in the Tarrant County Jail, supervisors and jailers started working mandatory six-day weeks, officials said Tuesday.

There is no estimate on how much the mandate, which will be reviewed within 30 days, will cost the county because the number of officers working the overtime will fluctuate, Chief Deputy Savala Swanson said.

Although the number of workers who are required to work the overtime is unclear, Swanson, who oversees jail operations, said the Sheriff's Department is "aggressively" seeking ways to fill the positions and curtail the overtime.

"These are people who have been there for us through the years — not the people that have resigned or left, but who have stuck with

us," Swanson said. "We don't want to abuse them. We want to help them where we can help them."

The confinement division, which includes the county's jails and booking offices, has 63 of its 651 positions vacant, about 10 percent of its staff.

Recruitment has been a continuing problem on the county level, and the biggest staff hemorrhage is in the jail. To help allay the problems and bolster recruitment, Tarrant County commissioners recently gave jailers an average pay raise of 10 percent in the county's annual budget.

Earlier in the budget season, sheriff's officials pointed to the staff shortage as one reason the Sheriff's Department's overtime costs ran over budget.

Before the mandate went into place on Monday, Swanson said "the sheriff couldn't send anyone to training, had to cancel vacations."

"When we have 63 vacancies and can't

make up for it, the jail cannot operate," he told commissioners. "We are, at that point, broken."

But Commissioner J.D. Johnson, a self-appointed watchdog of Sheriff David Williams' budget, questioned the need to have every jailer, supervisor and booking officer in the confinement division work an extra day each week.

Johnson said he didn't know about the mandate — which Swanson said Williams approved — until officers started calling him during the weekend.

"I know they're short of help," Johnson said. "I understand that with a shortage of people you have to work overtime. But when you make it mandatory for all your sergeants, lieutenants and guards to work an extra day a week to make up for it, that does not make sense. It looks like very poor management to me."

Karen Brooks, (817) 390-7752  
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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2000

# Perry shows videotape of Anderson incident

**Democrat says footage proves opponent misled public about his handling of DWI case.**

**By JACK DOUGLAS JR.**  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Democratic sheriff's candidate Luther Perry released a videotape yesterday that he says proves his Republican rival, Dee Anderson, "misled the public" about his role in a DWI investigation 15 years ago.

The tape, a portion of which was played by Perry for members of the Tarrant County Senior Political Action Committee, shows Anderson asking a drunken driving suspect to take a breath test.

At the time, Anderson was a patrolman with five years of ser-

vice with the Arlington Police Department. A year later, he became a spokesman for the department and continues in that job.

Anderson said Tuesday that he would not "dignify" Perry's accusations with a comment. A spokesman for his campaign, Chris Gavras, issued a written statement saying that Anderson's "opponent is a man of desperate and false accusations," who "has no accomplishments of his own to speak about."

The tape's beginning, which was not played for the PAC members, shows a second man, who appeared to be in a uniform, reading the DWI suspect his rights and also asking him to undergo a Breathalyzer test.

The suspect, accused of causing

a fatal accident in June 1985 and ultimately convicted of involuntary manslaughter, refused to take the test.

Perry has said that Anderson made a mistake by not ordering the driver to submit to a blood test. The case against the driver would have been stronger, and his punishment possibly harsher, if Anderson had insisted that the test be administered, Perry said.

Anderson has said that he did nothing wrong in the investigation and that he was simply acting as the backup officer in the case. He has called Perry's assertions political mudslinging.

Perry countered yesterday by saying that Anderson has deliberately "misled the public" about his participation in the DWI case and that the videotape shows that he

was the primary officer in the investigation. He said the unidentified man shown asking questions in the videotape was likely a "Breathalyzer expert" and not a commissioned police officer.

May Della Everett, 83, who attended the PAC meeting, said she will probably support Perry, but she sternly lectured Perry on his comments about Anderson's role in the drunken driving investigation.

"You can't say what you said today," she told him, "and not take on a kind of ugly stance."

Everett, a member of the Texas Silver Haired Legislature and the National Silver Haired Congress, told Perry he "may lose some votes" because of his comments about Anderson.

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2000

## CAMPAIGN 2000



Dee Anderson Luther Perry

### INSIDE

- Perry shows video of Anderson incident. **8B**
- Tarrant County jail staff must work six-day weeks. **5B**

# Sheriff's candidates expect to find tattered department

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — The two candidates for Tarrant County sheriff agree on one thing: Whoever is elected will find a department in disarray, its officers downtrodden by years of controversies and tragedies.

Republican Dee Anderson and Democrat Luther Perry say the

department has been distracted for nearly 16 years by highly publicized feuds involving the top brass of two previous administrations.

On Jan. 1, either Anderson or Perry will inherit the beleaguered Sheriff's Department, driven by a \$64.2 million annual budget and manned by 1,240 jailers, deputies and other workers.

Many employees complain about low pay and a lack of appreciation by the public because of ill will between Sheriff David Williams and the five-member Tarrant County Commissioners Court.

"Our people are getting flat-out ignored," said Ron Blair, president of the 300-member

(More on CANDIDATES on Page 8B)



## Tarrant County Deputy Sheriffs Association.

Their campaign styles are vastly different — Perry often stumping at public events, Anderson mostly meeting privately with supporters

— but their promises are strikingly similar.

Each has pledged to stop the bickering that has spawned ugly headlines, to address the neglected needs of the rank-and-file officers and to shore up the massive operations of the Tarrant County Jail.

An immediate task, both say, is to improving working conditions at the county jail, which has 62 openings for guards, according to county personnel records.

Commissioners recently approved raises of up to 19.2 per cent for jailers in hopes of attracting applicants.

Perry and Anderson accuse Williams, a Republican, of ignoring the jail, while devoting his attention to such police novelties as souped-up patrol cars and surveillance helicopters.

"Before we start talking about new ideas, we need to go back to the old ideas," Anderson said last week before a small gathering of deputy sheriffs in Hurst. "We need to run the best jail in Texas."

Perry spoke to the same group. He said the "current administration is just a total embarrassment to law enforcement."

The candidates say sheriff patrols also need to remain strong in the unincorporated areas, encompassing 36,000 residents over 110 square miles.

Both say they would be more accessible to rank-and-file officers, as well as to the media that Williams has so fervently avoided during his two-term, eight-year tenure.

"You won't have to worry about where Luther Perry is," he told the group of deputies.

Said Anderson: "You don't have to be special to talk to me."

Anderson and Perry have continually harped on what they call gross mismanagement by Williams, who lost his bid for a

third term in the March 14 Republican primary.

Williams did not return repeated phone calls to his office and home seeking comment for this article.

But in a recent command staff meeting, the sheriff denied that the department is in turmoil. A participant in the meeting, who asked not to be identified, quoted Williams as saying the department will be a "well-oiled machine" when he turns it over.

After being asked by the *Star-Telegram* about transition plans, the Sheriff's Department invited Anderson and Perry to tour the department. Such a tour, the written invitation said, could "dispel a number of alarming rumors" and give "an accurate perception of the scope, magnitude and functional logistics of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office."

The invitation did not say what rumors needed to be dispelled.

Anderson, who is spokesman for the Arlington Police Department, and Perry, who retired on Friday from the Fort Worth Police Department, said they will accept the invitations.

In the recent command staff meeting, according to another person who was there, Williams also boasted that he had saved the department from a "train wreck," caused by his Republican predecessor, Don Carpenter.

Anderson and Perry contend that Williams worsened troubles that began in 1985, after Carpenter became the first Republican elected to the office. Now 70 and living on a Wise County ranch, Carpenter disputed allegations by Anderson and Perry that he was a "problem" sheriff.

As a Haltom City detective and fledgling candidate for sheriff in 1992, Williams promised to "professionalize" the Sheriff's Department and wipe clean its tarnished reputation.

The steady stream of skirmishes has taken a toll on officers, and they are ready for new leadership, said Lance Rodman, a jailer on the graveyard shift.



# CAMPAIGN 2000

"We're ready for the long nightmare to be over with," Rodman said.

Darran Gabbert, a \$34,000-per-year deputy sheriff in the crimes against children division, said he believes that the tension between Williams and the commissioners has affected his pocketbook.

The pay is better at area police departments, said Gabbert, adding: "But I'm proud of being a Tarrant County deputy sheriff, and that's where I am going to stay."

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2000

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The candidates running for Tarrant County sheriff and critics of the current administration say the office has been marred by tensions during the past 16 years. Here are some of the incidents that have occurred:

- **1985** — Don Carpenter becomes the first Republican elected as sheriff in Tarrant County.
- **Soon after** the election he and commissioners begin fighting over who should run the jail commissary.
- **1989** — A man kills himself and his ex-girlfriend after taking her hostage at the county courthouse. Carpenter is criticized because he ordered specially trained Fort Worth tactical officers to leave the courthouse before the shooting.
- **1992** — Carpenter resigns before finishing his last year in office after a Tarrant County grand jury indicts him

on charges of falsifying records and stealing weapons from a police property room. He is acquitted.

■ **Jan. 1, 1993** — Republican David Williams takes the oath of office in a bizarre midnight ceremony on Jan. 1, 1993. He promptly fires three members of the department's command staff.

■ **Williams** convinces commissioners that the department needs helicopters.

■ **September 1997** — the aviation division is grounded after one of its choppers crashes, killing two deputies. Shortly after, Williams stops attending commissioners meetings, even when they asked questions about his fleet of patrol cars and Tahoe trucks, his deployment of personnel and equipment, his handling of budgets and his transfer of \$327,000 in jail commissary funds to a jail-minister friend.



MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2000

■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

### Vote switch?

As a Tarrant County voter, I was quite dismayed that our Republican candidate, Dee Anderson, couldn't find time to participate in a debate with Democratic candidate Luther Perry at the recent Minority Leaders and Citizens Council.

Anderson gave his reasons for not attending: (a) The Arlington Police Department just solved a major murder investigation, and he was too busy with that to attend; and (b) he was targeting Republican groups as a base of support.

To my knowledge, the department gave no major news conferences on the date of the debate or the day after. The debate was also scheduled after Anderson's normal duty hours.

From what I understand, Anderson is the department spokesman, holds no investigative duties in the homicide division and should not be bothered with the workload of the investigators in this case. It is blatantly arrogant to dismiss the importance of the minority members of the community just because they may not support you.

If Anderson is wanting to represent the Republican Party, he needs to represent this party at forums such as this one. These forums exemplify where he can gain a much broader base of support from the entire community.

Because of the apathetic attitude of Anderson toward this election, this Republican is seriously considering casting her vote for Perry.

Lora Harris  
Arlington



# Using Williams' logic, let's deny he is sheriff



**BUD  
KENNEDY**

COMMENTARY

**W**e used to complain about the Tarrant County sheriff never showing up at the courthouse.

After what happened last week at the courthouse, we're better off when Sheriff David Williams stays home.

Ten weeks before the end of his reign as the High Sovereign Sheriff — who once claimed powers under the Magna Carta and tried to impose his own taxes — Williams came to the district attorney's office Oct. 11 to give testimony in a routine lawsuit.

He and a deputy took a public elevator to the ninth floor of the county justice center.

(More on KENNEDY on Page 10B)

"That's scary," said Anderson, a fellow Republican and an Arlington police officer. "Poor thing. I don't know what he's so fearful of.

"I don't have any phobia about sharing a public elevator."

Perry, the Democratic challenger, is a Fort Worth police officer.

"We've talked about several things that will improve under a new sheriff," Perry said. "Add one to the list. The wait for an elevator will get shorter.

"The taxpayers of Tarrant County own that elevator," he said. "They have every right to use it."

Tell that to Sheriff Williams. If you can find him.

Bud Kennedy's column appears  
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.  
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They not only took it.

They kept it.

While Williams answered questions, the deputy held the elevator more than an hour. Lawyers and jurors stood and fumed while the deputy stood guard at the doors.

Finally, in the face of loud complaints and a growing threat of citizen rebellion, the deputy surrendered the elevator.

Good thing.

Williams was questioned for two more hours.

When asked why the sheriff took command of our public elevator, a Williams spokesman gave a response in keeping with Williams' responses of the past eight years.

The spokesman denied that anything like that ever happened.

Sheriff's Capt. John Dalton told *Star-Telegram* reporter Max B. Baker that the sheriff can't hold an elevator. He said maybe the elevator was broken.

Sure, John.

Maybe the other floats were broken last November in the downtown Fort Worth holiday parade. Maybe that's how Williams bullied his way out front and his float cut ahead of the grand marshal's.

Maybe the county garage was broken. Maybe that how Williams' deputies kept and hid three county vehicles that were supposed to go to other jobs.

Maybe the county gas pump lock was broken. Maybe that's how Williams could gas up our county buses to carry his political supporters to a rally.

Maybe the county radio was broken. Maybe that's how Williams showed up unexpectedly and barged into an Arlington water park disturbance, disrupting local police.

This isn't even the first time Williams has taken over an elevator. Courthouse workers in several different offices have told of deputies guarding elevators. Even bathrooms.

On Jan. 1, either Dee Anderson or Luther Perry will take over as sheriff. The winner may not fire Williams' arrogant cronies or score a richer jail commissary contract.

But the two men agree on one issue. Both promise to let the public use our public elevators.



# Plaintiffs want sheriff to identify jailed officials

BY KAREN BROOKS  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Two Tarrant County sheriff's deputies accusing Sheriff David Williams of political discrimination want him to identify elected officials who he testified have been incarcerated in the Tarrant County Jail.

In a motion filed Friday by attorneys Jason Smith and Art Brender, Deputies Glen Allison and Steve Henry are asking a judge to compel Williams to release the names as part of a lawsuit they filed last year.

The suit claims that Williams discriminated against Allison and Henry after they supported his opponent in his 1996 race for reelection. They accuse him of moving them to less desirable positions after their names appeared in an ad

for the Democratic candidate.

The names of the elected officials who have been jailed would be used to find out whether Republicans were given preferential treatment — and Democrats retaliated against — in the jail, allowing the plaintiffs to establish a pattern of political favoritism, attorneys said.

"I just don't believe people should be retaliated against, or given special treatment, because of their political affiliation, whether they're an employee at the department or an inmate in the jail," Allison said.

"I don't know why Sheriff Williams was so reluctant to answer the question. What's he hiding? I don't know. I would like to know who they are myself."

Brender, one of the deputies'

attorneys, is the chairman of the Tarrant County Democratic Party.

Assistant District Attorney Ward White, who is representing Williams, said late Friday that he didn't want to comment until he had seen the motion.

During a deposition taken as part of the lawsuit, White said that releasing the names would violate state and federal laws if the officials' records had been expunged, and that Williams didn't know whether they had or not.

Williams lost the Republican nomination to Dee Anderson in March.

Williams testified in a deposition last week that a Republican supporter, Ed Max, contributed \$25,000 to \$50,000 to his 1992 campaign. When his son, Gary Max, was arrested and sentenced to

100 days in the Tarrant County Jail, he didn't serve the time there.

Instead, he was transferred to the Wise County Jail, which Allison's attorneys say is nicer. Williams testified in his deposition that the younger Max was moved to protect him from the news media.

Later in the deposition, Williams testified that he believed that some elected officials had been in his jail at one time or another.

"I don't know what their party affiliation was, but it's my understanding that there have been elected officials placed in the Tarrant County Jail since I've been in office," he testified.

He declined to give names after White instructed him of the law. Williams could not be reached to comment late Friday.



# We Recommend . . .

## Tarrant County Sheriff

Run the jail and serve warrants. The primary responsibilities of an urban sheriff in Texas can't be explained more simply than that. But in Tarrant

County, a community that has suffered from too many years of bad relations between the sheriff and the Commissioners Court, there is one other important job: communication.

Republican Dee Anderson has made a 14-year career out of communicating information about law enforcement matters to residents. As the spokesman for the Arlington Police Department, Anderson became a symbol of trust for people wanting news — good or bad — from the department.

Those experiences taught Anderson important lessons that he will bring to the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department about communicating on all levels — with the Commissioners Court, with other law enforcement agencies in the county, with the media and with residents.

His observations of how outgoing Sheriff David Williams performed his duties also taught important lessons. "Williams made a fatal mistake in not talking with the commissioners," Anderson says. "And our police chief in Arlington can't pick up the phone and call the sheriff. Communication issues are a huge problem with him."

It's a problem that Anderson doesn't intend to repeat. He has pledged to hold regular news conferences with the media — "I can't imagine public officials telling the media, 'I'm not going to talk to you'" — and to attend as many Commissioners Court meetings as possible.

Anderson understands that opening the lines of communication will be the first step in restoring the credibility to the Sheriff's Department. If he does nothing more than that, he will succeed as sheriff.

The *Star-Telegram* recommends **Dee Anderson**.



# Sheriff swing vote still sizable

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson holds a commanding lead over recently retired Fort Worth policeman Luther Perry in their race to become Tarrant County's next sheriff, according to a poll commissioned by the *Star-Telegram*.

But the survey of 900 people, conducted Sept. 26 through Oct. 12, also shows that a large part of the county's most-likely voters — 35 percent — has still not decided whom to vote for, giving Democrat Perry reason to believe that he is still very much in the race.

"I think these last couple of weeks are going to be crucial," said Perry, 46, who retired on Sept. 29, ending 25 years with the Fort Worth Police Department.

"We're going to close that gap. I think we're going to have a great opportunity, where nobody gave us a prayer to win," he said.

Among the most-likely voters contacted randomly by telephone for the poll, 37.6 percent said they would vote for Anderson, a Republi-



Anderson



Perry

## Hesitant voters

Candidates in the sheriff's race face a puzzle: As Election Day nears, 35% of most-likely voters remain undecided.

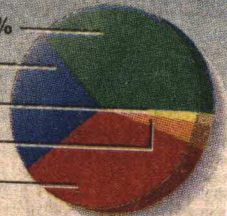
Anderson/Republican 37.6%

Perry/Democrat 23.6%

Other 0.7%

Neither of above 3.1%

Not sure/no opinion 35.0%



SOURCE: *Star-Telegram* Tarrant Poll  
Margin of error is plus or minus 3.3 percentage points

## Star-Telegram The Tarrant POLL

► Nearly 1 in 5 Tarrant County voters undecided, poll finds. 24A



can, and 23.6 percent said they would vote for Perry.

Anderson, 44, a 20-year veteran of the Arlington Police Department, and its spokesman for the past 14, said he was not surprised by the numbers. He suggested that his lead is greater than indicated in the survey.

"I think it's going to be a good day on the 7th," said Anderson, referring to the date of the general election, Nov. 7.

The poll divided the county into three demographic areas — Arlington, the northeast and the remainder of the county, most of which lies in Fort Worth. It interviewed 300 randomly selected adults in each of those areas.

The study has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points for the entire sample. The margin of error is as much as 5.7 percent for subgroups, such as those in which respondents were divided by gender or age.

Those contacted said they mainly think of the 1,240-member Tarrant County Sheriff's Department as an immense crime-fighting force for the rural pockets of the county. After that, they said, the department should concentrate on being the gatekeeper for the county jail.

Third on their list of priorities, according to the poll, was providing law enforcement throughout the county, even in the mostly urban areas that have police protection.

Fourth on the list of priorities, poll participants said, was the need for the sheriff to work closely with county commissioners in managing the department's budget — something that the current sheriff and the commissioners have failed to do for years. Listed last was serving arrest warrants and other court documents.

Outgoing Sheriff David Williams, a Republican, successfully ran two campaigns on pledges of becoming the county's "top cop." But as he began to initiate those plans, beefing up patrols, buying high-power weapons and acquiring helicopters, he quickly ran afoul of county commissioners, who questioned whether the jail — and the more than 3,000 prisoners it holds — was being neglected.

Williams' stormy relationship with the commissioners and his controversial funding of a jail ministry group, along with revelations

that he was listed as AWOL while serving in the military, repeatedly cast him in a negative light during his two terms and nearly eight years in office.

He was one of six candidates defeated by Anderson in the March 14 GOP primary.

Both Anderson and Perry said they will work to shore up the operations of the county jail, without weakening the department's policing of the unincorporated areas.

Since their solid victories in the primaries, Perry, who is black, and Anderson, who is Anglo, have repeatedly said race should not be a consideration in selecting the next sheriff. The *Star-Telegram's* poll, however, suggests that there is a distinct racial divide between those supporting Perry and those supporting Anderson.

Among likely voters who said they like Anderson, 43.7 percent are Anglos, while 18.6 percent are minorities.

Of those who support Perry, 42.7 percent are minorities and 20.2 percent are Anglos, according to the poll.

Perry attributed his popularity in the minority community not to the color of his skin but to the 14 years

he spent with the late Fort Worth police chief, Thomas Windham. Perry acted as a liaison between the department and the African-American and Hispanic communities during Windham's tenure.

"I will tell you," the candidate added, "I'm respected in the white community as well as I am in the black community."

Perry accused Anderson's campaign of ignoring much of the county's minority community so that he can spend more time with predominantly Anglo Republicans.

"You can't have a sheriff who only wants to cater to Republicans. You can't have a sheriff who only wants to talk to white people," Perry said.

"My opponent is desperate," Anderson responded.

"I don't think I have to defend my campaign strategy to anyone," he said. "I've spent a great deal of time in the past month meeting with Hispanic and African-American leaders to be sure we are in touch with them and in tune with the needs of their community. That's going to continue ...



# Sheriff busting budget, auditor says

## Commissioner says county is forced to pay extra overtime wages

BY BOB MAHLBURG  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams — who has battled county commissioners over funding for helicopters, cars and police dogs — now seems poised to leave office by running his overtime budget into the red.

County Auditor Renee Tidwell said Tuesday that Williams has seriously overspent his budget for overtime wages, forcing commissioners to waive spending limits to cover his current payroll.

Barely a month into a new budget year, Williams has already spent overtime money designed to last for three months, Tidwell said.

“And we projected that he will blow the whole year’s budget in three months,” she said.

Commissioners say they are frustrated but powerless.

“We don’t have a choice but to pay overtime,” Commissioner

J.D. Johnson said. “It’s unfortunate the sheriff is not down here doing his job he’s being paid for.”

Williams, who lost his re-election bid and will leave office in January, did not attend the Commissioners Court meeting. But Savala Swanson, the jail commander, said many of the overtime costs were unavoidable because of staff shortages, family leave and the need to fill shifts while training new employees.

“We’re still in the status of vacancies,” Swanson said. Swanson said the sheriff attended a “very involved meeting” recently to explain the situation and expressed concern.

County officials tried to curb the sheriff’s spending in his three final months in office by giving him only three month’s worth of money. Johnson said then that commissioners restricted Williams to a quarter-year budget so that “he cannot spend the entire year’s budget” before he leaves

office.

But officials have quickly found that they can’t control the biggest part of his budget: salaries and overtime.

Tidwell said factors contributing to the overrun include the sheriff’s order for a mandatory six-day workweek, and the overtime costs from training new workers.

“It is very likely the total amount of overtime expenditures will exceed the total amount appropriated for the full year,” Tidwell wrote in a memo to county officials.

County Administrator G.K. Maenius put it more bluntly: “We’re going to bust the overtime budget.”

Commissioner Glen Whitley called it “another illustration that our sheriff can’t manage. We have no control over what’s going on. It puts us in a very difficult situation.”

Tidwell said money saved on

salaries for vacant Sheriff’s Department jobs can be used to help cover the \$200,000 overtime gap. But she said the county may have to dip into emergency funds to cover the rest of the year.

Commissioner Marti VanRavenswaay has asked for weekly updates on the situation. Commissioner Dionne Bagsby suggested a detailed study of how sheriff’s employees are used.

And County Judge Tom Vandergriff has said he plans to talk to area legislators about coming up with ways the commissioners can rein in elected officials.

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To search the Metroplex, go to [www.dfw.com](http://www.dfw.com)



"We're not excluding anyone in this race," Anderson said. "I want to be the sheriff for everyone."

Local political science experts

**"Thirty-five percent makes a heck of a difference. Your undecided voters can easily shift either one of these candidates into the win column."**

— Victoria Farrar-Myers,

assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas at Arlington

said the racial divide between the candidates' supporters probably has more to do with party affiliation than with the race of each candidate. In Tarrant County, they said, Hispanics and African-Americans are more likely to be Democrats, while most Republicans are Anglo.

"Probably a lot of those folks [contacted by the poll] don't even know the race of each of the candidates," said Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at Texas Christian University.

Riddlesperger said the survey's findings strongly indicate that Perry has an "uphill battle." But, he added, "with that many undecided voters ... they obviously could fall either way."

The poll indicates that 45.6 percent of the voters in the northeast part of the county are undecided, suggesting a possible battleground for Perry and Anderson.

Thirty-three percent of those polled in Fort Worth were undecided, while 24.3 percent of the voters interviewed in Arlington said they had not made a final choice.

Riddlesperger noted that Arlington and northeast Tarrant County are traditional strongholds for conservative Republicans, and he predicted that the great majority of the undecided voters in those areas will choose Anderson.

But Victoria Farrar-Myers, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas at Arlington, said the large percentage of undecided voters suggests the sheriff's race can tighten.

"Thirty-five percent makes a heck of a difference," Farrar-Myers said, adding: "Your undecided vot-

ers can easily shift either one of these candidates into the win column."

She also noted that senior citizens, people who are 65 and older, are the "most reliable" to turn out at the polls. In that age category, the survey shows the race to be much closer, with Anderson garnering 37.6 percent to Perry's 33.8 percent.

Anderson should be concerned that he does not have the conservative vote wrapped up in the northeast part of the county, Farrar-Myers said. Based on the poll's results, she said, "You very much have a race."

Anderson said he is not worried. He said his campaign has conducted its own "private poll" that shows a "much lower" number of undecided voters, especially in the northeast, and that his lead is "greater" than the *Star-Telegram's* finding of 14 percentage points.

He declined to disclose the specific findings of his campaign's poll.

While professing profound confidence in a victory, Anderson said he must work to ward off complacency among his own supporters,

fearing that they may become so certain of a victory that they don't feel it necessary to vote.

In an interview last week, Perry said he was just as confident that he will win. But he also briefly shared his thoughts of life after possible defeat.

"If the voters of Tarrant County want to elect Dee, you know, I'm going to still work toward trying to make Tarrant County the best place in the world to live," he said, quickly adding:

"If the voters elect Luther Perry, I'm going to do the best job that I can. That window of opportunity is still there."

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To search the Metroplex, go to [www.dfw.com](http://www.dfw.com)



# Sheriff's race

Whether you're likely to go to the polls on Nov. 7 or not, which of these candidates, or any other, do you support for sheriff?

	Total	ARL	NE	FW	Male	Female	<35	35-49	50-64	>65	HS or less	Some college	College graduate	<\$40K	\$40-\$75K	>\$75K
Anderson/Republican	37.6%	52.0%	34.6%	31.8%	41.1%	34.2%	29.5%	39.8%	45.9%	37.6%	33.9%	38.6%	43.4%	33.1%	35.6%	49.9%
Perry/Democrat	23.6	19.7	15.7	31.5	23.9	23.3	20.2	19.0	25.4	33.8	26.4	26.0	22.7	28.0	34.0	15.0
Other	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.4	0.2	1.2	0.7	1.0	0.9	-	0.6	1.3	0.5	1.5	-	0.5
Neither of the above	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.2	5.3	3.7	1.5	1.6	3.7	3.8	2.3	3.6	2.6	2.4
Not sure /no opinion	35.0	24.3	45.6	33.0	31.7	38.2	44.3	36.5	26.2	27.1	35.4	30.4	31.1	33.9	27.8	32.3

Star-Telegra

## How the research was conducted

Star-Telegram

The *Star-Telegram* commissioned a poll of 900 Tarrant County residents that was conducted Sept. 26 to Oct. 12 on several issues, including the races for president and Tarrant County sheriff.

DSS Research of Arlington conducted the interviews, 300 each from greater Arlington, Northeast Tarrant County and greater Fort Worth.

Gary Kromer, the *Star-Telegram's* director of research, designed the poll and worked

with DSS Research to make sure that the results represent the most accurate picture of Tarrant County possible.

Respondents were scientifically selected from households with listed, unlisted and newly connected telephones. General quotas for gender and age were set, and the final data was computer-weighted to appropriate proportions based on adult population estimates.

For the questions relating to all of Tarrant County, the margin of error is plus or minus

3.3 percentage points at a confidence level of 95 percent.

In other words, Kromer said, if this poll were conducted 100 times using identical methods, in 95 of those surveys, the reported results would be within 3.3 percentage points of the total population's opinion.

Within each of the three smaller areas, the sampling error is a maximum of plus or minus 5.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. Smaller subgroups have larger sampling error margins.



## Windham's intentions

I was appalled after reading Dee Anderson's statements during the recent sheriff candidate debate regarding my husband's endorsement of Luther Perry.

My husband, former Fort Worth Police Chief Tom Windham, wrote his letter endorsing Luther shortly before his death. Luther did not know about it until after Tom passed away, and only three people knew the true intention of the letter: my husband, his secretary and I.

Allow me to make it perfectly clear that after looking at all nine of the candidates at the time, Tom decided that Luther was the most qualified by far. For Anderson to contest the meaning of the letter as if he had talked to my husband is outrageous.

Even though he was a staunch Republican, my husband endorsed Luther over all of the candidates, including Anderson, because of his good instincts, his experience and his leadership abilities, which he accumulated from his experience at the Fort Worth Police Department. The chief felt that all of this experience prepared Luther to deal with the needs of the entire Tarrant County community.

In the future, I would appreciate it if Anderson would refrain from acting and speaking as though he knew my husband and his intentions. His actions and statements only prove that he did not.

Even though I am a Republican, I will proudly cast my ballot for Luther Perry for sheriff on Nov. 7. I know that if my husband (who served as Fort Worth's chief of police for 15 years) were here, he would do the same.

**Maria Windham**



# Students get taste of heated campaign in campus debate

BY JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Candidates in two of the hottest races in Tarrant County squared off in a college campus debate Wednesday, imploring students to side with them in the final stretch of the election campaign.

The students at the Southeast Campus of Tarrant County College said they were surprised by some of the acerbic comments made during the debate, for many their first up-close show in local political wrangling.

They heard from Republican Dee Anderson and Democrat Luther Perry, candidates for sheriff, and from Betsy Price, a Republican, and Diane Roffey, a Democrat, who are running for county tax assessor-collector in the Nov. 7 general election.

Anderson said he believes he has won the public's trust during his 14 years as the spokesman for the

Arlington Police Department, appearing often on television and in newspapers in connection with such high-profile cases as the 1996 abduction and slaying of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman. "I hope ... people will understand that is the real person that you're seeing [on TV], someone that's been honest [and] someone who's reported good news and bad news equally," he said.

Perry also touted his communication skills, honed, he said, during his 13 years of working as a liaison between the minority community and Thomas Windham, the late Fort Worth police chief. Perry retired last month, ending 25 years as an officer in the Fort Worth Police Department.

He accused Anderson of being lackadaisical in his campaign style and with associating only with



Anderson



Perry

Republicans. "My opponent has never walked out into the streets of these communities," Perry said.

Roffey, who is an appraiser for the Tarrant Appraisal District, repeatedly proclaimed: "I am the most qualified candidate on the ballot" in the assessor-collector race.

She criticized the *Star-Telegram* for endorsing her opponent, Price, in an editorial.

"You ... have to be very cautious about putting stock in the endorse-



Price



Roffey

ments of newspapers," Roffey said, adding: "I think the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* has done a disservice to the taxpayers of Tarrant County by endorsing my opponent."

Price said little about her opponent when she spoke. Instead, she talked about her qualifications as a small-business owner, providing title and licensing services to area car dealerships. That job, she said, has required her to spend "thousands of hours" in the county tax office.



# Sheriff, tax assessor-collector candidates

## appear at TCC Southeast

"I would appreciate your support," Price said. "I think that I'm real qualified for this office."

Bryndan Wright, a Republican candidate in the 24th Congressional District, also spoke to the students, saying there is a way to help the environment and simplify the federal tax code at the same time. Wright's opponent, U.S. Rep. Martin Frost, a Dallas Democrat, was not at the debate.

Wright said the tax code consists of 7 million words, all typed on paper made from trees. There are 480 different tax forms and 280 additional forms explaining the process, he said.

Wright said that "294,000 trees every year give their life to the tax code." Cut the paperwork, he suggested, and fewer trees will be

chopped down.

Anthony Burke, with the Internal Revenue Service in Washington, said that there are "more than 700 forms" for filing taxes, but that the majority of Americans use the relatively simple 1040 forms.

The students also heard from Rick Clay and Frank Brady, members of the Libertarian Party who are seeking congressional seats.

"I have no campaign; I have no budget," Clay said. He then corrected himself and said, "I've had one campaign contribution from my brother. It was 20 bucks."

With less than two weeks before Election Day, Brady said he has little hope of victory. "I would like to say I have a chance of winning," he said, acknowledging, however, that he does not.

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■ **LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR**

**Senior endorsements**

The Tarrant County Senior Political Action Committee, a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to address issues of concern to Tarrant County's older population, has endorsed the following candidates in the general election:

■ U.S. House District 12: Mark Greene.

■ Tarrant County sheriff: Luther Perry

Endorsements made prior to the spring primary elections are still in effect. They are:

■ U.S. House District 24: Rep. Martin Frost.

■ Texas Senate District 12: Sen. Mike Moncrief.

■ Texas House District 89: Nathan Schattman.

■ Tarrant County commissioner Pct. 1: Commissioner Dionne Bagsby.

**Wilhelmina Gladden**

*First vice chairwoman, Arlington*

**OBITUARIES**

**Virgel Traweeks**



**FORT WORTH** — Virgel Traweeks, 65, a retired USAF staff sergeant, died Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2000, in Azle.

**Funeral:** 10 a.m. Friday at Laurel Land Memorial Chapel of Fort Worth. Burial: Laurel Land Memorial Park.

Virgil Traweeks was preceded in death by his wife of 42 years, Barbara Traweeks, earlier this year.

**Survivors:** Son, Virgel Lamar Traweeks of Fort Worth; brother, Willie Trawick and wife, Ruth, of Jay, Fla., sisters, Lucille Wilson of Milton, Fla., Janice Ford and husband, Carl of Oviedo, Fla.; and granddaughter, Barbara Traweeks of Fort Worth.

Laurel Land Funeral Home  
7100 Crowley Road, (817) 293-1350



■ LETTERS, FAXES AND E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

### The man whom we need

The *Star-Telegram* did a grave disservice to Tarrant County residents by failing to endorse Luther Perry for sheriff.

Dee Anderson is a fine media relations administrator, with years of experience helping his superiors look good. If elected, he will probably improve relations with the Commissioners Court and continue presenting a media-friendly spin to the *Star-Telegram*. Sadly, these appear to be the only criteria that the *Star-Telegram* used to evaluate sheriff candidates.

Perry is a skilled administrator with extensive experience as a patrol officer, a recruiter and an investigator. Perry has firsthand experience arresting armed assailants, placing rapists and burglars behind bars and putting drug dealers out of business.

Perry is an outstanding communicator. He is the only candidate to reach out to the black, Hispanic and Asian communities. He is the only candidate to offer to debate in any forum. He has also campaigned vigorously in the Mid-Cities area.

Luther Perry will be a sheriff of whom we can all be proud.

**Jim Hollingsworth**  
*North Richland Hills*

### Great things ahead

Republican Dee Anderson is a credit to law enforcement and a credit to the city of Arlington. He carries himself well and comes across as competent but approachable.

We believe that he is going to follow in the footsteps of other great leaders from Arlington such as Tom Vandergriff. We look forward to following his career once he is elected sheriff.

**David and Susan McAmis**  
*Mansfield*



# OPINIONS

## Missing candidates

The Senior Political Action Committee of Tarrant County, a nonpartisan group, studies issues of interest to seniors, screens candidates for public office and makes endorsements.

When we made our endorsements in February, no candidate in U.S. House District 12 or in the county sheriff's race received the necessary 60 percent needed to receive an endorsement.

On Aug. 5, we sent letters to candidates Kay Granger, Mark Greene, Dee Anderson and Luther Perry, inviting them to speak to our organization on Oct. 3. In mid-September, we had not heard from some of the candidates. We then called campaign offices.

Three of the candidates responded, and Greene, Perry and a representative from Granger's office spoke to our group. The group voted to endorse Greene for District 12 and Perry for sheriff.

Anderson never returned the numerous messages that I left on his answering machine, and he did not attend the meeting. I can only conclude that he doesn't want to talk to us.

Shame on you, Dee. Remember that seniors vote.

**Betty Fischer**  
*Arlington*

## A friends-eye view

How often do people get to vote for a candidate whom they know? We have rarely had that opportunity, but this election will be different. We are friends of Dee Anderson's, and we are going to vote for him for Tarrant County sheriff. Usually we vote for people based on what

we read or what we hear from friends and neighbors. We often wonder what the candidates are really like. In Dee's case, we know what he is really like. He takes his work seriously, but privately he is funny and kind. He loves kids dearly.

He probably won't admit it, but his work on the Amber Plan — as co-founder — was very personal because of his love of kids. He is a dedicated husband and a complete sports nut. His love of sports stems from being the son of a former local sportswriter and being around sports with his dad. He was often carried off the training camp field after practice by a big Dallas Cowboy player — all the players liked Dee. To this day, every Friday night he referees high school football games.

We could go on and on about Dee. The bottom line is that he is a terrific person. We can't imagine a better sheriff.

**Jeff and Holly Smith**  
*Arlington*

## Superior candidates

I've been trained to think for myself. I look for the walk and discount the talk. If voters confronted the truth about the little good that Gov. George W. Bush has been for us in Texas, they'd see and smell Texas bull and would vote for another man.

All of our Democratic candidates are superior to the Republican candidates. Especially do we need to reelect our strong county commissioner, Dionne Bagsby. We need Luther Perry as sheriff, fully qualified from 25 years with the Fort Worth police. A small-business man and good family man, Mark Greene will serve us well as U.S. representative. The highly qualified and experienced Diane Rofey will be the best tax assessor-collector that Tarrant County has ever had.

I will vote for Al Gore. Wherever we don't have Democrats, I will vote for Green Party candidates.

I have good reasons also to endorse Republican judicial candidates Don Cosby, Jeff Walker and Lee Ann Dauphinot.

**Paul D. Way**  
*Fort Worth*



# Texas sheriff races include convicted Frio incumbent

The Associated Press

Electing the top cop will be anything but typical for voters in many of the 107 Texas counties where sheriff's races are contested.

At least 18 sheriffs are retiring, but that's not the reason some other incumbents won't remain in office.

The embattled Tarrant County sheriff didn't even win the primary. The Frio County sheriff has pleaded guilty to felony theft and drug charges, although his name remains on the ballot for Tuesday's election.

In Scurry County, the Democratic sheriff was running unopposed until he was disqualified for voting in the Republican primary. Darren Jackson's name was taken off the ballot, and Democrats named retired Sheriff Keith Collier as the party's candidate.

But Collier will refuse the post if he's elected, leaving a vacancy for county commissioners to fill. Jackson, who says he didn't know that he broke a state rule, says he's optimistic that commissioners will appoint him sheriff after Collier, the only name on the ballot, wins.

"There are some strange and unusual races this year, and from what we're hearing, it's going to be a heavy [voter] turnout," said Steve Westbrook, executive director of the Sheriffs Association of Texas. "People seem to be interested in the office of sheriff, especially in rural areas. These people know their sheriff or his family when they may not know other elected officials."

One sheriff's race in West Texas is shaping up to be a real brawl.

Ector County Sheriff Reggie Yearwood, a Democrat who has been in law enforcement 34 years, was elected in 1996 as the county's first black sheriff.

"People seem to be interested in the office of sheriff, especially in rural areas. These people know their sheriff or his family when they may not know other elected officials."

— Steve Westbrook  
Sheriffs Association of Texas

His opponent is Mark Donaldson, a Republican who started his law enforcement career in 1977 and is now the chief bailiff at the county courthouse. Donaldson had been chief deputy under the former sheriff defeated by Yearwood, who demoted Donaldson in 1997 and fired him in 1998.

Yearwood has said Donaldson was terminated because he refused to house federal prisoners at the county jail.

Donaldson has denied that claim and says he still doesn't know why he lost his job.

Frio County voters can elect Democrat Lionel Trevino or Republican Carl Burris, the current sheriff who faces at least five years in prison for conspiring to distribute marijuana and stealing from the government.

In a San Antonio federal courtroom last month, Burris admitted taking \$7,726 confiscated during a traffic stop and trying to sell about 262 pounds of seized marijuana in order to replace the missing money in 1997.

His guilty plea came too late for his name to be removed from the ballot. But when Burris is sentenced in December, his conviction will be final and he will no longer be a law enforcement officer.

If he is elected, county commis-

sioners will appoint a new sheriff after Burris is sentenced.

"When you make a mistake, you need to stand up, fess up to it and let the law take its course," Burris told the *San Antonio Express-News*.

Tarrant County Sheriff David Williams lost his chance for reelection when he was soundly defeated in the Republican primary by Arlington police spokesman Dee Anderson. The Democratic candidate is Luther Perry, a 24-year veteran of the Fort Worth Police Department.

Williams has had constant, well-publicized battles with Tarrant County commissioners over budgets and the operation of the Sheriff's Department. Williams even sued commissioners in 1998 but dropped the suit several months later.

Among the 18 retiring Texas sheriffs is Freestone County Sheriff Sonny Sessions, who has been in office 35 years.

Another is Rafael Cuellar Jr. of Kenedy County, about 100 miles north of Mexico and 270 miles south of Houston. He's been sheriff for only eight years but is a beloved figure known for his humanitarian work.

Cuellar, 61, started an immigrant cemetery in Sarita to give dignity to those who died of heat exhaustion and thirst on their journey to a better life.

In the last four years, at least 62 migrants have died in Kenedy County, and Mexican and American governments declared it one of the three deadliest immigrant passages along the border.

"I never forget the body or the spot we find it," Cuellar said.



For around the clock news updates, go to [www.star-telegram.com/frontpage/update.htm](http://www.star-telegram.com/frontpage/update.htm)



CAMPAIGN 2000

# Both sheriff candidates are confident

**Republican Dee Anderson and Democrat Luther Perry say they have poll results indicating they will win.**

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — In the final stretch of the often-raucous Tarrant County sheriff's race, both candidates say they are confident they will win, and each cites the existence of new political polls that fuel their optimism.

Republican Dee Anderson predicts a lopsided blowout in his favor, while Democrat Luther Perry sees the contest coming down to a photo finish on Tuesday night.

No matter who wins, the election marks the nearing of the end for David Williams' control of the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, a 1,240-member force with a \$64.2 million budget that has been riddled by controversy, conflict and tragedy since Williams took office eight years ago.

Perry, 46, recently retired after 25 years as

a Fort Worth police officer, and Anderson, 44, is the 14-year spokesman for the Arlington Police Department. Both said they are still seeking out undecided voters.

Last month, a *Star-Telegram* poll showed Anderson leading Perry. Among most-likely voters, 37.6 percent said they favored Anderson, while 23.6 percent said they planned to vote for Perry. An additional 35 percent said they had not made up their minds.

Anderson said last week that a recent poll by his campaign showed his lead was expanding and that there is a "solid, double-digit" difference between his support and that

of Perry's. He did not release specific numbers from the poll.

Anderson said he is also encouraged by the record number of people who voted early in the county's traditionally Republican strongholds, including the polling site at Cliff Nelson Recreation Center in southwest Arlington.

Perry, meanwhile, said he believes that Anderson is kidding himself. "If Mr. Anderson was as well-liked as he thinks he is, his numbers should look just like Mr. [George W.] Bush's, and they don't," he said.

Perry said he has been told of a recent Republican poll that shows that Anderson's lead has "decreased substantially" and that support for Perry has "substantially increased."



Anderson



Perry

Local Republicans do not want to make the poll public, Perry contends, because it doesn't look good for Anderson.

"People are going to be tremendously surprised," Perry said. He said that is why Republicans don't want to release the poll information. "The race is close, extremely close ... and it's right there for anybody to take."

Chris Gavras, a spokesman for Anderson's campaign, and Pat Carlson, chairman of the local GOP, both say they do not know of a poll that shows the race to be close.

In the waning days of the race, Anderson once again accused Perry of political mudslinging for saying that Anderson botched a drunken-driving investigation 15 years ago that allowed someone to escape a harsh punishment for causing a fatal accident. Anderson has maintained that he did everything correctly in the old investigation.

"I have not taken any of this personally," Anderson said, adding that he hopes Perry ends the campaign "with a good feel."

Perry said he feels great. "I think, when it's all said and done, we're going to be pleased with the effort we've put forth," he said.

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- Poll access improves for disabled voters.
- List of candidates. 3B



## TARRANT COUNTY SHERIFF

# Command staff can expect much scrutiny

By JACK DOUGLAS JR.

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**FORT WORTH** — If some ears are burning at the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department, there may be good reason as Sheriff-elect Dee Anderson ponders what changes to make in the department's top command staff.

Anderson, a Republican elected by a landslide in Tuesday's

elections, declined Wednesday to identify which commanders he may replace. He said, however, he has "no doubt" that there will be some new leadership at the top, "and it's not just going to be me."

Anderson, the spokesman for the Arlington Police Department, won the election with 274,609 votes, compared with 173,774 for

Democrat Luther Perry, a recently retired Fort Worth police officer.

Once he becomes sheriff, Anderson said, he will take his time and talk to each member of the command staff before making any changes.

"Everyone who wants to stay will have the opportunity," he said.

Most of the Sheriff's Department's 1,240-member force is protected under Civil Service provisions, meaning that their employment is secure after Anderson is sworn in at the first of the year.

But nine top commanders are not protected under Civil Service. They "serve at the pleasure" of lame-duck Sheriff David Williams and can be fired at any time, officials say.

Two elected officials close to Anderson agreed with growing speculation that at least three supervisors on that short list are in danger of losing their jobs under the

new sheriff. All three are considered members of Williams' inner circle.

They are:

■ Assistant Chief Deputy Larry Hester, who makes \$67,632 a year and is over patrol, criminal investigations and the internal affairs division.

■ Capt. John Dalton, who makes \$57,180 and is over personnel, recruiting, training and communications. Dalton is also the designated spokesman for the department.

■ Capt. Dave Barrington, who makes \$45,012 and is a supervisor in the criminal investigations division.

Hester said Wednesday he has "normal concerns" for his job. Saying he is not a "rebellious employee," he added, "I would appreciate an opportunity from the sheriff-

elect to meet with me, for him to get to know me and for him to make his own decision" on whether to keep him on the command staff.

"I am a Christian and I trust the Lord to take care of me," Hester said.

Dalton said he also wants a chance to talk with Anderson. After that, he said, "If the new sheriff comes in and doesn't want me in the position I'm in, I'm sure there's some other place in the department where I can work just as well."

Barrington, said he has 20 years of experience as a lawman. "I would hope that the sheriff-elect would look at a person's qualifications and their resume and history ... before making any personnel decisions," he said.

County Commissioners Marti VanRavenswaay and J.D. Johnson said Wednesday that they would like to see Hester, Dalton and Barrington gone, though each emphasized that the decision is not up to them.



VanRavenswaay said that, although loyal to Williams, the three commanders have in the past expressed "obvious disdain" for members of the Commissioners Court, creating a "difficult" relationship between the department and the court.

Anderson has "some ideas on people he would like to work with, and I doubt these people [Hester, Dalton and Barrington] are on that list," VanRavenswaay said.

Johnson said he would like Hester, Dalton and Barrington to be taken off the command staff "immediately" after Anderson becomes sheriff.

"I have not been impressed with anything Hester has done," he said.

Hester responded by saying he hopes Anderson makes up his own mind and does not listen to anyone on the Commissioners Court who may be "telling him who he should hire or fire."

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2000

### Poor sportsmanship

I watched Tarrant County sheriff candidate Luther Perry as he spoke in a disrespectful manner toward those who voted for Dee Anderson "on the coat-tails of George W. Bush." This was whining of a spectacular magnitude.

I split the voting on my ticket to vote for the best candidate in many races. Most of my friends voted their consciences, not a party ticket; in doing so, they studied the issues and candidates and made a choice.

Even though Perry lost, I expect him to conduct himself as a man, not a child who has lost a game and can make himself feel better by denigrating his opponent or his supporters. I help coach a soccer team, and I would (and will) pull any of my players who demonstrate such a poor attitude. Perry should remember this in any future runs for office.

C.M. Menger

Fort Worth



# Former Tarrant jailer gets life sentence for Rowlett attack

By JEFF PRINCE

Star-Telegram Dallas Bureau

DALLAS — Former Tarrant County jailer Clinton Dale Shelton has received a life sentence for shooting a Rowlett couple.

Jurors deliberated about three hours Thursday before sentencing Shelton to life in prison and fining him \$10,000 for killing Michael Hierro, a soft drink bottling company worker, on Dec. 20. Shelton was also sentenced to 20 years in prison and fined \$10,000 for the aggravated assault of Hierro's wife, Marisa Hierro.

Shelton, 43, will serve the sentences concurrently. He will be eligible for parole in about 30 years.

"We will be at every hearing, every

parole that he ... will ever have," Marisa Hierro said from the witness stand after the punishment phase of the trial concluded. "I think he's a monster. He doesn't care what he's done."

Early in the seven-day trial, Hierro testified that Shelton and his wife, Catherine, wore masks and ambushed the Hierros as they pulled into their driveway Dec. 20. The masked man shot and killed Michael Hierro, 30, as he was getting out of his car. The gunman then chased and shot Marisa Hierro after she ran.

Marisa Hierro said she fell and pretended to be dead, then listened as the attackers discussed whether to shoot her again. She said that she recognized the voices as those

of the Sheltons, a couple she knew through a previous business venture.

Marisa Hierro began working at Catherine Shelton's law office several years ago after Shelton defended Michael Hierro against a robbery charge. The women later formed an immigration consulting company before having a falling out.

Police have not charged Catherine Shelton in the shooting, citing a lack of evidence tying her to the crime. However, police indicated she remains under suspicion. She did not testify or attend the trial.

Defense attorney John Young had asked the jury to consider probation, saying Shelton had no criminal record before the shooting. The jury also heard about Shelton's

previous employment as a jailer in Tarrant County and as a constable in Dallas County.

Three character witnesses — an aunt, uncle and former college professor — described Shelton as well-mannered and kind and said they would provide him support if the jury offered probation.

Prosecutors, though, urged jurors to lock Shelton away for life.

"He shot [Michael Hierro] down like a dog," lead prosecutor Toby Shook said. "He executed him. Does that sound like a mind that's open for rehabilitation?"

District Judge John Nelms allowed Hierro family members to sit at the witness stand and speak to Shelton at the trial's end.

Marisa Hierro took the stand first, but

Shelton refused to acknowledge her. He turned sideways in his chair and began speaking with his attorney. Nelms told the defendant and his attorney to stop talking while the Hierros spoke.

"You still can sit there, not even looking my mother in the eye," J.T. Hierro, the couple's 18-year-old son, said to Shelton.

Shelton quickly looked up and fixed a hard gaze on the teen-ager. They stared at each other for a long moment as the youth spoke.

Then Shelton looked away.

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