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ON POLITICS

BETTY PRICE PARKER

Clouds cover
Martinez's vow
of openness

During last summer's campaign, Gov. Bob Martinez spent about \$500,000 on a TV ad criticizing Florida legislators for holding meetings closed to the news media, and promising that Martinez would push to require state lawmakers to conduct public business in public.

Nor were capitol reporters informed about a meeting Martinez held last week with Republican state senators, or about the governor's travel plans, which included trips to Miami and Texas.

The weekly schedule eventually was released, but only after a group of capitol reporters explained the law on public documents to Martinez's staff.

Now the press corps is watching with interest to see just what Martinez makes good on his campaign promises regarding open meetings in the Legislature, but whether he intends to abide by the principle of accessibility himself.

Martinez unthaws one job

Even if the news media wasn't fully informed of the governor's design, that doesn't mean he was inactive. On the same day Martinez announced a hiring freeze on about 2,000 state positions — including about 570 in the Department of Transportation — he created one new DOT job.

The position, Public Transportation Specialist I, the annual salary \$13,484, who just happened to be Martinez's personal assistant during most of the campaign.

Ex-cop may run for mayor

Former Fort Myers police chief Morgan House says he's thinking seriously about running for Fort Myers mayor in the 1988 election.

House, who resigned last February after 11 years as the city's top cop, is now chief of security for the National Bank of Lee County.

A definite decision on the mayor's race is months away, House said, but in the mean time he's working actively "and getting some good encouragement."

It would be the first police chief to make such a move.

Under Bill's 23 years as Fort Myers public chief before stepping down in 1974 to run successfully for City Council and then serving as mayor from 1978 to 1980.

Mack studies his chances

Another man with 38 very much on his mind is U.S. Rep. Cassin M. Mack, R-Cape Coral.

Mack pulled a landslide victory in last fall's race, but has to run again in two years. If he stays in the House, he's certain he'll win. He doesn't expect any Republicans to run against him, and a Democrat would have a high-impossible chance in his heavily Republican district.

But Mack has said he might challenge Florida's senior U.S. Sen. Lawson Childs, a Democrat.

Mack thinks Democrat Graham's November Senate victory over Republican Sen. Paula Hawkins was due more to personality than issues, and means little in terms of a platform directive from Florida voters.

Democrat gubernatorial nominee Steve Picke, however, lost to Martinez because Picke's weak with the liberal label voters, Mack said.

Could Childs be so labeled?
"That's something we'll be taking a look at," said Mack, who's home this week during a congressional break.

On the down side, Mack said if the current Republican administration's transportation controversy expands and continues, "it could be perceived as being a negative for any Republican candidate."

On the upside, the fall election proved Reagan's coalition don't always extend far enough to make or break a candidate, Mack said.

The conclusion is that Mack's still considering the Senate race, but he says it's too early for a final decision.

The man, he's already got a good start on fund raising. Recent campaign records indicate Mack had about \$100,000 left from November's contest.

Betty Price Parker's column appears weekly in this space.

Local/State

NEWS-PRESS ••• THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 1987

Court gives osteopathics' group nod to build hospital

By BETH FRANCIS
News-Press Staff Writer

A state appeals court has cleared the way for a 130-bed osteopathic hospital to be built in the Fort Myers area, a spokeswoman for the court said Wednesday.

In October, the appellate court overturned an IRS decision to deny a state certificate for the hospital, which was requested by Doctors Osteopathic Medical Center Inc. of Fort Myers.

IRS attorney John Gilroy said his agency will not pursue the case.



Phyllis and Arthur Tolman lead their students through some fancy steps during a ballroom dancing class at Delta Tura in North Fort Myers. The couple also teaches dance classes in Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda.

Couple fox trots through class, giving students toe-tapping fun

By BARBARA COMPTON
News-Press Staff Writer

These shows were made for dancing. The white leather tops slide out from under the pink pants as the cha-cha-ba-ba! was across the floor. They are soon joined by an assortment of samba, boleros and mass boleros, often tripping over each other in an attempt to repeat the fancy footwork.

A school system's music superintendent. But she did not intend to dance professionally until she married her husband 33 years ago.

Right, left, right, left, respond at least a quarter of the other shoes and their owners.

But since then the couple has been on a whirlwind schedule of dance classes nearly every afternoon and night of the week. They teach in ballrooms scattered around Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda and Fort Myers.

The Saturday morning ball dance class begins nearly three years ago, Phyllis Tolman said. The class was a way to accommodate those who may not have regular dance partners.

"So many ladies don't have partners and still want to dance," she said. The dance is composed of rows of dancers performing the same steps.

"The ladies enjoy it — it's great therapy. You have to think every minute," Phyllis Tolman said.

Those who would like to join any of the Tolman dance classes can contact the couple at 827-1896.

Some of the stars of the class used to be a different model for joining in on the fancy footwork.

When asked what brought him to his first lesson, John Gault, 63, of Fort Charlotte responded, "her and her," pointing to his wife, Venita, 60, and her friend, Gloria Norris, 61, from Michigan.

Case delay

Ex-investigator misses date for deposition

By CHRIS COOPER
News-Press Staff Writer

Deposition, original case reports and even the original investigator are missing and threatening to further bog down the conclusion of an eight-year-old Charlotte County murder case, a prosecutor said Wednesday.

Port Charlotte teen-ager Linda Plauritz, 12, was burned to death in October 1978 in a June, Bradley Scott, 31, of West Palm Beach, was charged with her murder. He is awaiting trial.

Prosecutors said they are about ready to take the case to trial.

"We are basically in a trial posture," said Assistant State Attorney Paul Alessandro.

But the prosecutor doesn't expect Scott's trial to begin for at least another two to three months. The defense is not even close to being ready, he said.

But missing investigative documents, depositions and a former investigator who didn't show up for his deposition Monday are not helping to speed things along, Alessandro said.

Jim Jones, a Charlotte County Sheriff's lieutenant who retired in 1985, was given a hand-delivered subpoena in December ordering him to show up for a Monday deposition in North Carolina.

Jones, of Asheville, N.C., was an investigator for the Plauritz murder case in 1978. Alessandro and Assistant Public Defender Wayne Woodford from in North Carolina to take Jones' sworn statement about his involvement in the Plauritz case.

"When Jones did not show up, 'we called him,'" Alessandro said. "But the number we knew was good in December was disconnected."

Alessandro said the attorney later learned that Jones had a new telephone number but that it was unlisted. They returned the Charlotte County warrant without hearing the former investigator's statement.

But plans are in the works to make Jones come in this afternoon. Alessandro said Woodford will file a motion today asking a judge to require Jones to tell the court why he did not show up for the deposition. If Jones doesn't have a good excuse, officials will seek a bench warrant for his arrest on contempt charges.

Jones could avoid spending 175 days in jail he used to supervise, Alessandro said. Or he could be jailed in North Carolina.

At the time of his retirement, Jones was being investigated by the state Department of Law Enforcement because he was in charge of a department fund account that had \$10,000 missing. The investigation has been closed but the money has never been found.

Jones is only one of possibly 140 witnesses in the case, Alessandro said. But as an original case agent, his testimony is important. And there's a narrow question case attorneys want Jones to answer, Alessandro said.

"The sheriff's department is missing a number of the original investigative documents. I'm sure he'll be asked what happened to them," Alessandro said.

Investigators have said Scott never was their chief suspect in the Plauritz murder case. But the original 12-page case implicating Scott was requested by the state attorney in 1980. The case laid dormant until 1981 when the attorney's assistant, Kenny Barnes, took over the investigation, submitted a 2,000-page report and was rewarded with a first-degree murder conviction against Scott.

Barnes, now a Lee County Sheriff's investigator, said some documentation of the work Jones did on the Plauritz case is "missing." But that doesn't mean it's missing, he said.

"When I got the case package — if you could call it that — it was pretty 'rimpy,'" Barnes said. "People interviewed kept saying I gave a report on that already and I could never find those reports."

"But my experience with Jim Jones is he didn't write on the reports," Barnes said.

Barnes added that he doesn't know what Jones said to the cops in giving a sworn statement.

"I asked him, before he left the matter, after I got the case. At the time, he professed a vague memory of the details because of a stroke he suffered and medication he was taking," Barnes said.

Alessandro also said some depositions, including some of Barnes's, are missing or at least incomplete.

Woodard, who is in charge of all the depositions, does not comment on the case he has. A secretary at his office said the public defender would not make an exception.

Most area shellfishing bans lifted

News-Press Staff Writer

Selected Charlotte County waters that have been closed to shellfish harvesting because of heavy rainfall since Dec. 25, will reopen as surfer tide, a state spokesman said.

Shellfish harvesting was suspended in the high concentrations of bacteria on heavy rainfall and surfer tide.

"We've pretty much come to accept that when you have a high rainfall in a highly developed area, you can pretty much expect that sort of thing happens," Sprague said.

State Department of Natural Resources biologist Mike Sprague said high bacteria levels in waters in Lemon Bay and Cooper's Inlet have abated and the rich clam harvesting areas there are open again.

Runoff from the rain washes fertilizer, chemicals and bacteria into waterways.

The Myakka River is still closed to shellfishing, Sprague said.

That's because a sewage treatment plant in North Fort continues to leak water of questionable quality into the river.

Sprague said water quality tests will be conducted in the Myakka River next week.

The biologist said Lemon Bay and Cooper's Inlet yielded high quantities of clams — even in areas of a few commercial harvesters.

"When you go like this in closed, the phosor craps off the hook," Sprague said.

The biologist said all approved Charlotte County waters with the exception of the Myakka River are now open. An interested harvester can obtain a shellfish harvesting map free by calling the DNR at 638-3443.

Council OKs \$131,677 downtown project

By CELIA RUSSELL
News-Press Staff Writer

While the Punta Gorda City Council just the broken up plans to land for downtown parking lot, it's all good news for renovations to streets and sidewalks on West Martin Avenue.

the purchase lot in this year's city budget.

The city had made a tentative offer of \$23,000 to the owner, Sun Bank. But council members decided the purchase could wait until the next budget year, which starts Oct. 1.

"The good is, we don't have the money to buy it right now," said Mayor E. W. "Jack" Beck.

Downtown revitalization also has renewed good relations between the city and downtown merchants, Councilwoman Phyllis Smith said.

"We have achieved a better feeling between the two groups, something we've always wanted to do," said Smith, who created the Punta Gorda revitalization committee in July 1985.

This year, the committee wants to expand its beautification project to downtown residential areas, she said.

"We want to create an awards system to encourage people to restore, paint or landscape their homes," she said. "It's an old community and we want to make it more attractive."

Improvements will be made to the street and sidewalks between northbound U.S. 41 and Taylor Street as part of the city's downtown revitalization program.

Martin Avenue renovations include the addition of old-fashioned lampposts and benches. Sidewalks will be trimmed with brick and the road will be repaved.

The job, by Koenig Construction, will cost the city no more than \$113,677. Work will start Feb. 15 and be completed by mid-April.

Council voted Jan. 7 to delay buying a 2,000-square-foot parcel for public parking between Martin Avenue and Herald Court. Money for