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NEWS-PRESS**** FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 1987

JOE WORKMAN

Feisty engineer drafted pleasure in legal fights

John Amis was a different sort of man.

The difference wasn't so apparent in his looks, speech or carriage. But he was different.

The simple fact is that John C. Amis Jr. of Bonita Springs died of cancer last Saturday at the age of 67. But there was a lot more to Amis than the simple fact.

He was an engineer, licensed in 49 states. He also was engaged in real estate, map making and the bar and restaurant business.

That Amis didn't go ahead and get an engineering license in Alaska to round out the 50 states says something about his difference.

Most people would have done that. But Amis just didn't want to bother with it, so he didn't.

Amis also was a fighter. Wit, determination and homemade legal training were the weapons he employed to wage his battles.

Amis relished a good legal clash with government. It didn't make any difference which government, city, county or federal. He took them all on.

Like his battles with the city of Fort Myers. He didn't buy an occupational license from the city for almost 20 years.

The city slapped him with more than $600,000 in fines and put liens on his property.

Amis laughed and battled back, writing and filing his own legal briefs. "They're going to have to take it out of my hide or put me in jail," he said, without any perceptible fear of incarceration or loss of hide.

HE TOOK HIS case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The fact the highest court in the land wouldn't hear his arguments didn't deter him.

Two years ago he turned the tables and sued the city for more than $750,000, contending that it illegally mowed, cleared and seized his land.

"He's quite a colorful character," one of those named in his suit said. "He's a modern-day Don Quixote."

Only a year ago Amis sued the Lee County tax collector over items seized at the Dome Bar and Restaurant in Bonita Springs. Before that, Amis had taken the tax collector all the way to the Supreme Court in another case.

Never mind that he lost that other case. He wasn't bitter.

In fact, when he was joined with Tax Collector **Dick Steele** and others as defendants in an action by the Internal Revenue Service, Amis remarked, "Dick Steele and I are in bed together."

He also tangled with the county over property taxes and the federal government over income taxes.

"I've probably been in court 50, 75, maybe 100 times," he said. "I've got so many cases going it's hard to keep up with them."

A JOHN BIRCHER, Amis also sniped at paper money, citing the constitutional provision which says: "No state shall...make anything but gold and silver coins a tender in payment of debts..."

And he put a sign on a lot to sell it for "10,000 dollars of silver. Please do not offer federal reserve notes," it said.

Amis sometimes made you wonder just how serious he was about all this legal business. He would grin while he stretched his lean frame and poked around his cluttered desk fishing out legal documents to make a point.

It was like he was pulling everybody's leg for amusement. Even in the way he named his business Amey Inc., instead of Amis Inc. He said he did it because the correct pronounciation of his name sounded like Amey.

"It's a bunch of foolishness like the rest of the stuff I'm in," he said with that ever-present twinkling of his eyes.

Genae, his wife of 33 years, said: "He was more the intellectual type. He'd try to get a spark out of someone. He wanted to get a good, lively conversation. He read immensely, biographies, philosophy, nutrition and legal stuff."

On Sunday there will be a memorial service for John C. Amis Jr. at 2 p.m. at the Lee Memorial Methodist Church in Bonita Springs. Nice things will be said about him, as they should.

I don't know if anybody will say he was a different sort of man. But he was. He truly was.

Joe Workman's column appears in the News-Press Friday, Sunday and Wednesday.

Charlotte County could be home to baseball legends

By CELIA RUSSELL
News-Press Staff Writer

Charlotte County could become the site of a multimillion-dollar theme park and resort complex for retired major-league baseball players — if businessman Lee Muhleman has his way.

"It'll be good for the players and for the fans," Muhleman, marketing services supervisor for Rotonda Properties Inc. said Thursday.

The development company is one of three finalists in a competition to pick a site and developer for the project, he said. Executives from the 5,500-member Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association will select the finalist about Aug. 17, he said.

Rotonda Properties' entry is a 680-acre parcel off State Road 771 in Rotonda, he said. It has several advantages over the other two sites that developers are offering in Manatee County and Lakeland, he said.

"It's a beautiful site — it's near the coast and it's already got a golf course and a marina," Muhleman said.

He declined to say exactly how much the project would cost or how much the land would sell for if his company landed the project.

The proposal for the commercial, residential, sporting and special events center includes a baseball stadium for alumni and

See BASEBALL, page 2B

Charlotte, union still bargaining

By ROBIN POLLACK
News-Press Staff Writer

Charlotte County officials and union representatives hammered out some minor contract agreements Thursday, but they are waiting until next week's bargaining session to start talking money.

County Personnel Director Gail Mansam promised representatives of the Public and Industrial Employees Union Local No. 1998 that she will have ready by the next meeting the county's counterproposal to the union's wage hike demand. Officials and union representatives will meet at 10 a.m. Aug. 14 at the Charlotte County Administrative Center in Murdock.

The union, which represents about 400 full-time and 91 part-time employees, is seeking a 50-cent-an-hour wage increase for all workers. That would cost the county an additional $463,320 next year.

Union business representative Ed Prata has threatened to declare an impasse if a wage agreement is not reached by Sept. 1.

"I've been ready to talk money — we're waiting for them," he said.

If an impasse is reached, negotiations will have to be brought to a third party, Mansam said.

Mansam said she is "working very diligently ... to devise a good (salary) plan that will be beneficial to all of the employees. ... I think you will be pleased when you see our wage proposal."

The union is seeking increased retroactive sick pay and day care for children of county employees — issues that were not addressed Thursday.

During that discussion — the fourth since contract talks began in July — county officials gave in to the union's demand for standby pay for employee. Standby applies to a worker who technically is done for the day or week, but is asked to remain home for a period of time in case he or she is needed later.

The county agreed to pay such an employee an hour's worth of salary for every 10 hours the employee is on standby. Mansam said she doesn't know how much that will cost the county.

Other points agreed upon include the time of advance layoff notifications, time off for jury duty and the procedure for seeking an unpaid leave of absence.

THOMAS A. PRICE/News-Press

Bicycle ballet

There's more than one trick you can do on a bike. Allen Goulding, 15, of Port Charlotte, practiced his modified handstand Thursday in the parking lot of the Port Charlotte Beach Complex.

Restaurant held up, four forced into freezer

By CELIA RUSSELL
News-Press Staff Writer

A man waving a gun barricaded Richard Voss and three coworkers in a closed walk-in freezer Wednesday night before robbing a Charlotte Harbor restaurant of an undetermined amount of cash.

But the 21-year-old manager of Long John Silver's Seafood Shoppe said Thursday was just another day at work.

The Charlotte County Sheriff's Department is investigating the robbery, which occurred about 10:50 p.m., just after the restaurant had closed for the night, said department public information officer Tracey Melneciuc.

A black man armed with what police believe was a .357-caliber Magnum entered the restaurant at 4191 Tamiami Trail through an open rear door, Melneciuc said.

Voss disagreed, saying the door was locked and the robber had forced the door.

The man, who was described by witnesses as muscular, between 5-foot-9 and 5-foot-11, and having a short afro. He was shirtless and wore blue jeans, sneakers and a black bandanna covering his nose and mouth, Melneciuc said.

He took Voss' wedding ring, then rummaged through the two female workers' purses.

"He then proceeded to tell them to get down on the floor and not to look at him," Melneciuc said.

The restaurant employees described the thief as excited and high-strung, she said.

The man then ordered Voss, Stacey Durham, 16, Yolanda Miller, 40, and Daniel Brese, 18, into the freezer and barricaded the door with some trays and food racks.

After they could no longer hear the robber, the two men broke down the door and called the sheriff's department. The women stayed in the freezer room for their own safety, Melneciuc said.

"They were very upset and feared for their own well-being," Melneciuc said of the workers.

Voss said that is the first time to his knowledge that the five-year-old restaurant had been robbed.

Though the experience was frightening, the restaurant workers are trained specifically to handle such emergency situations.

"They did what they were told to do and stayed calm," Voss said.

Accused murderer, in jail 14 months, pleads with officials for speedy trial

News-Press staff

Bradley Philip Scott, 36, is accused of first-degree murder in the slaying of 12-year-old Pikuritz, whose burned body was found in the woods off Toledo Blade Boulevard. Scott was arrested in May 1986 in Palm Beach County after Charlotte County Sheriff's Department investigators renewed their work on the Pikuritz murder.

The man accused of the 1976 murder of Linda Pikuritz of Port Charlotte says he's tired of delays in his trial, and he can't take any more of them.

Bradley Philip Scott, in a letter filed this week in Charlotte County Circuit Court records, pleads with court officials to proceed with his autumn trial and allow "justice to be heard concerning my case, to prove my innocence."

Scott, 36, is accused of first-degree murder in the slaying of 12-year-old Pikuritz, whose burned body was found in the woods off Toledo Blade Boulevard. Scott was arrested in May 1986 in Palm Beach County after Charlotte County Sheriff's Department investigators renewed their work on the Pikuritz murder.

Authorities have said they initially considered Scott a suspect, but didn't then have enough evidence to arrest him.

In his letter dated July 27, Scott, who is being held in the Charlotte County Jail, said, "My imprisonment is in its 14th month, since May 30, 1986, with the trial date set for Oct. 5, 1987. ... I am pleading to you, at the mercy of the court, to not be postponed any further."

Scott contends that, because the crime occurred nine years ago, prosecutors should have had plenty of time to prepare their case. So far, he writes, he hasn't received a speedy trial, as a criminal defendant is entitled to.

In his letter, Scott also cites family problems as a reason he opposes further delays.

"I've been married four years, with two children from this marriage. My youngest son is about to be operated on ... my wife is on welfare trying to make ends meet ... my father-in-law has had three operations for open heart surgery ... My mother is unable to work to help us (due) to her health."

Scott's trial had been scheduled for Aug. 17, but has been delayed. Circuit Judge William McIver ruled that Scott can receive a fair trial in Charlotte County, despite extensive news media coverage of the case.

Report: Woman died of gunshot wounds

A North Fort Myers woman found dead in her mobile home Tuesday died of multiple gunshot wounds to the chest and abdomen, a spokesman for the Lee County Medical Examiner's office said Thursday.

Lt. Rod Shoap of the Lee County Sheriff's Department said Trixie Lee White, 24, was shot with either a .38- or .357-caliber weapon.

White's body was found in her home at Smith's Trailer Park, 33 W. North Shore Ave., at 7:42 p.m. Tuesday, Shoap said.

Investigators are following all leads in the case but have no suspects, he said. Robbery does not appear to be a motive for the killing, he said.

The sheriff's department would not release further details about the investigation.

Department officials are getting help in the investigation from crime-scene experts from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department. The three-member Pinellas team brought laser equipment to search the mobile home for finger-prints, fibers or hairs that might be clues.

Shoap would not say whether the laser equipment turned up any clues.

Officials at the mobile-home park described White as a quiet woman who kept to herself and who paid the rent on time. She lived with her boyfriend, who found her body when he came home Tuesday evening, they said.

GARTH FRANCIS/News-Press

Defense demonstration

Arthur Rezoagli of San Carlos Park stands with a sign Thursday at a demonstration in front of the Lee County Courthouse. He was one of about 25 people who assembled to try to get people to sign a petition in support of the Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as the "Star Wars" anti-missile defense. The demonstration was sponsored by a coalition of groups supporting the defense initiative.

JIM SMITH SWORN IN AS FLORIDA'S 21ST SECRETARY OF STATE/7B

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