

Lawmen stay mum on Blairstown murder

By Mark E. Bowden
Gazette assistant state editor

BLAIRSTOWN — Three weeks after an elderly man was murdered in his mobile home at Blairstown, law enforcement authorities continue to keep quiet about the status of their investigation, despite fears by Blairstown residents — including the victim's 71-year-old brother — that the assailant could return.

"I'm scared to death," one Blairstown woman, who asked not to be

identified, told The Gazette. "I'd like to know if he's figured this out yet."

Her comments were representative of those voiced by several other residents who were interviewed.

But despite pressure from the public and the news media, the case's principal investigators — officers of the Benton County Sheriff's Department and the state Division of Criminal Investigation — are saying very little except to acknowl-

edge Amos Wesley Jellison, 75, was slain on the night of Aug. 2 or during the early morning hours of Aug. 3.

Jellison was found dead in his mobile home in Blairstown about 1:30 a.m. Monday, Aug. 3 after his nephew, Daryl, of Blairstown received an anonymous telephone call informing him his uncle had been injured and needed help.

Sheriff's officials say they're keeping mum about the case in order to protect their investigation,

while DCI representatives say they're following so many leads it isn't possible to give any solid information at this time. Officials will not divulge preliminary results of an autopsy, nor have they announced the cause of death.

Other sources, however, said Jellison was bludgeoned to death, and that the weapon used was a blunt instrument, not a sharp one as reported at the time of the murder.

And The Gazette has also learned Jellison may have been the victim of a robbery in which a large amount of cash — possibly \$10,000 — was taken by an assailant who became acquainted with Jellison when he was hospitalized at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Iowa City earlier this year.

Investigators are not in agreement about the motive for the slaying.

Benton County Sheriff Kenneth Popenhagen said his investigators

have determined that nothing was taken from the trailer or from Jellison's person, but DCI Director Gerald Shanahan said robbery is being considered as a possible motive, and Jellison's brother, in an interview last week, said robbery "could be the only reason" for the crime.

"We don't know that he had any money with him, but he had money in the bank," said Elmer Jellison, • Please turn to page 25A: Murder

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Cedar Rapids/Sunday, Aug. 23, 1981

Rail bonding bill

Plenty to do before trains start rolling

By Judy Daubenmier
Gazette Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — The solution to Iowa's rail problems is not just around the next bend, despite the passage of a railroad assistance program.

That's the word of caution state officials are voicing as they begin to make plans for implementing the provisions in the railroad assistance bill.

Railroad experts at the Iowa Department of Transportation say it could be up to 18 months or two years before the Iowa Rail Finance Authority sells its first bonds under the new law. In the meantime, though, they say the state will still be able to move ahead with negotiations with shippers, railroads and other parties.

The bill, which Gov. Robert Ray signed Saturday, allows IRFA to sell up to \$200 million in bonds to finance loans for railroad rehabilitation, or to form a limited partnership with other investors to buy rail trackage and rehabilitate it. One of the major sources of backing for the bonds will be revenue from an 8-cent-a-gallon tax on diesel fuel burned by railroads in Iowa.

Some of the first steps in implementing the legislation are legal proceedings. Ian MacGillivray, director of planning for the IDOT, said that involves a routine court test of the constitutionality of the rail bill, which is needed before bonds can be sold.

That procedure, according to IRFA attorney Steve Roberts, will likely take a year. In addition, he said, the tax-exempt status of the IRFA bonds must also be established with the Internal Revenue Service, and IRFA will also likely have to face a challenge by some railroads over the constitutionality of the diesel tax used to support the bonds.

"We have an attorney general's opinion that the tax is constitutional. While that is only advisory, at least the initial rendering is favorable," said Roberts.

While that process is going on, MacGillivray said, IRFA and IDOT officials will be meeting with shippers and railroads to determine where its first loans should be made.

"While it may be 18 months before IRFA has a bank deposit, we

can begin now the process of negotiating where it will participate and how its financial assistance will be used," he said.

The question hasn't been settled whether IRFA will form a limited partnership for purchase of rail lines itself, or whether it will choose simply to make loans to existing railroads or shippers' groups for purchase or rehabilitation of track.

"A lot of people made that (limited partnerships) the pre-eminent item in discussions about the rail bill," said MacGillivray. "The bill does authorize IRFA to participate in a limited partnership but it authorizes a lot of other things, including a financial assistance program for railroads implemented through a bonding program"

"The legislation is very broad, very general, intended to provide the flexibility in whatever IRFA decides is the best way to go."

MacGillivray said state officials have begun meeting with railroad and shipper groups to "identify where the priority involvement of IRFA should be. It's not possible to take on the solution to all the state's railroad problems all at once. The resolution of where its priority attention will be will depend on the input we get back from the shippers and railroads."

MacGillivray refused to speculate on whether IRFA will choose the limited partnership or loan route, but whichever method is chosen, private involvement will be important.

"In a limited partnership, IRFA probably will not have much invested itself, probably not more than 5 percent," said Les Holland, director of the IDOT's rail division.

"Most of the money will come from private investors who see an opportunity to make some money. At least 20 percent must be furnished by the shippers."

Other investors are likely to be high-income individuals who have cash to invest and are attracted by the tax-exempt status of the IRFA bonds and the tax losses they could use to their advantage.

MacGillivray refused to speculate on what parcels of track IRFA may choose to concentrate on first. But other state officials offered some suggestions.

"The first line that we choose will be one that sets the rating for the

bonds," said Holland. "The first sale governs how much interest there is going to be (in IRFA bonds) and their salability. It certainly will have to be a project that looks attractive."

High traffic, he said, will be a "key ingredient."

Backers of the bill have said all along they were interested in securing the Iowa trackage of the bankrupt Rock Island Railroad and the portion of the Milwaukee Road which its bankruptcy trustee has not included in the new core system of the Milwaukee.

Some possible candidates include the Iowa Northern Rail Line, which is composed of former Rock Island Railroad tracks linking Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, Holland said.

"They have made inquiries but not filed a formal application," said Holland.

Another possibility is the Rock Island track connecting Palmer and Royal in northwest Iowa, according to Mark Wampler, former IRFA chairman and now chairman of the state Transportation Regulation Board.

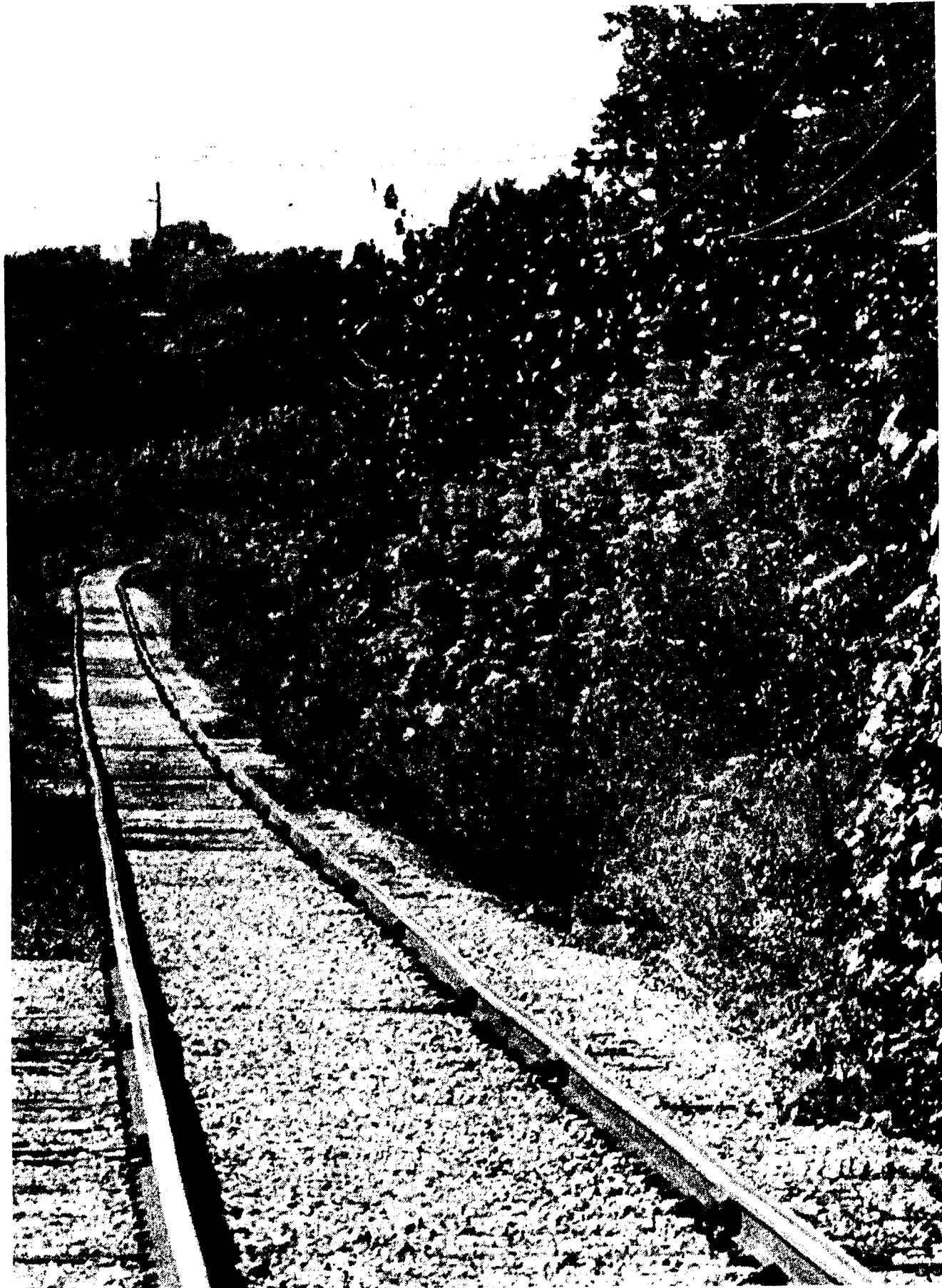
"The bulk of what we are talking about saving is going to be in the northwest corner of the state, where they have been left without service by the Rock Island bankruptcy and where all that pool-table-flatland is where they grow all that corn," he said.

One question is whether the tracks of interest to the IRFA will still be around by the time it has the money.

"We have visited with the trustees of the two railroads (Milwaukee and Rock Island) several months ago and their major creditors indicated a willingness to sit back and wait and to start negotiations once the bill passed, recognizing it would be two years before they would see any cash for their properties, so we are on firm ground there," said Holland.

"The Rock Island trustee and the Milwaukee trustee have been put on notice that the state is not just an interested potential buyer but a very serious potential buyer that will actually have some money," agreed Wampler.

"Negotiations can proceed with the Rock Island and the Milwaukee trustees even before the legislation clears its courtroom battles."



Gazette photo by Tom Merryman

It could be 1983 before service resumes on abandoned rail lines in Iowa

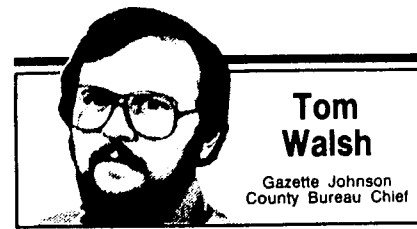
Oakdale project may include prisoner classification center

OAKDALE — The Iowa Department of Social Services has selected a Des Moines-based architectural firm to develop preliminary plans for a building project that would nearly triple the prisoner capacity of the Iowa Security Medical Facility at Oakdale.

The Iowa Legislature has authorized a plan to upgrade the state's prison system through a \$5.1 million conversion of a portion of the Mount Pleasant Mental Health Institute to house 326 prison inmates and a 200-bed expansion of the Johnson County Oakdale facility that would increase its prisoner capacity from 106 to 306.

The DeWild, Grant, Reckert and Associates architectural firm was selected late last week by a department screening committee to begin drafting plans and specifications for a \$7.4 million, 63,000-square-foot addition to the Iowa Security Medical Facility that could include a 100-bed reception and classification center for all men and women entering the state's penal system. Also planned is a 60-bed wing to house prisoners under medium-security conditions, a 20-bed special segregation area and a 20-bed medical holding unit.

The architects have been asked to forward their preliminary design of the Oakdale expansion to depart-



Tom Walsh
Gazette Johnson County Bureau Chief

ment officials by January for a final review by the Iowa Legislature's subcommittee on corrections/mental health. If state lawmakers buy the plan, corrections officials hope to let bids on the project next September and plan to begin construction in October. Construction work is expected to take two years.

"Assuming that the Legislature authorizes us to proceed with the project, we would like to complete it, move in and be operational by October of 1984," said William Armstrong, director of the bureau of support services for the department.

"The Legislature has authorized us to proceed up through the preliminary design and schematic phase, and we hope that will be completed when they meet in their next session. That will be the product they will review and pass judgment upon, and, if they see fit, provide us with an appropriation to pay for the construction costs as finally determined by the architect."

Armstrong and other proponents of the Oakdale expansion claim it makes more financial sense than constructing a new prison because Oakdale was designed and built in the late 1960s with a future addition in mind.

"The plan for Oakdale when it was originally constructed envisioned a much larger campus," Armstrong said. "There's an administration building, a main complex that includes all the treatment programs and support facilities, and then adjacent to that there's a dormitory where the inmates are housed. But it was envisioned as a 300- to 400-bed facility, and the boiler for the heating system was sized for a facility that would ultimately be of that size."

Paul Grossheim, deputy director of corrections, supports the plan to expand Oakdale as a cost-effective means of solving the problem of overcrowding in Iowa's prison system without taxing the state treasury any more than necessary.

"With some of the heating and the water system already in place and with it being large enough to take care of more than what's already there, there would be some savings to the taxpayer if new facilities could be built within the

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Urban family taking it easy in Frankville

By Mark Plenke
Gazette Northeast Iowa Bureau

FRANKVILLE — Just down the street from the old stone schoolhouse and the abandoned cheese factory, past the grazing Holsteins and the Volunteer Fire Department, across the street from Janet's Clip & Curl, is Livingood's supper club.

It's a long way from metropolitan Milwaukee, where Rex and Judy Rechsteiner lived until last April. They own the club and live in the house next door.

The Rechsteiners left the city for Frankville, a village of something more than 100 people that's so small it had to buy streetlights for the road through town with annual church suppers.

Both grew up in small towns, went to college in Decorah and lived 10 years in cities before moving back to the country.

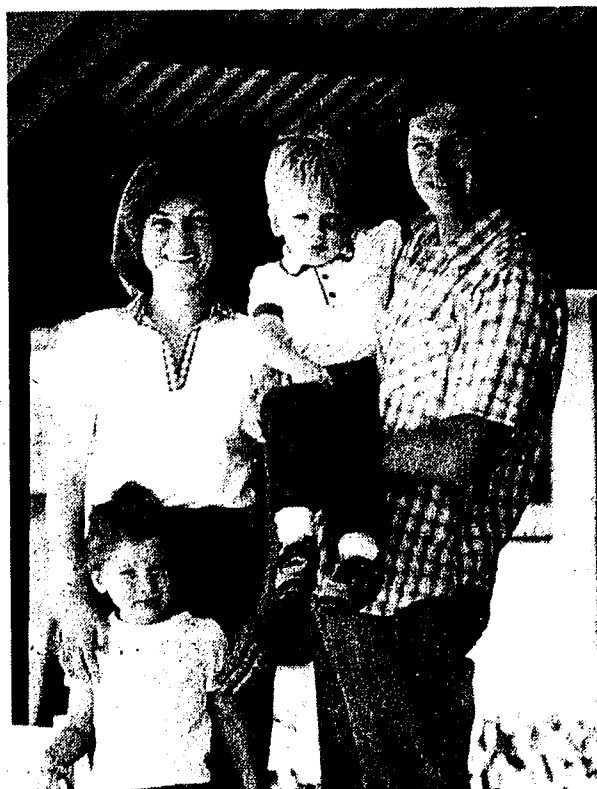
The first stop was Des Moines. Rex went to work for Shakey's Pizza and Judy finished her elementary education degree. It was their first taste of urban living. Their initial reaction was fear.

"It was 1971 and there was still a lot of black controversy in the cities. It was a bad time to go to the cities, really," Rex said last week.

Shakey's moved them to Beloit, Wis., and then to Milwaukee.

"For a city, it was better than Des Moines. It's a number of times as big, but there are lots of blue-collar workers, Germans and Polish, so it seemed like small towns," he said.

Milwaukee had a lot to offer, and the Rechstei-



The Rechsteiner family of Frankville: Judy and Rex and their children, Amy and Paul.

ners accepted. They toured breweries when friends came to visit, enjoyed the city-wide Summerfest, watched car races, bused to the shore at Lake Michigan and cheered the Milwaukee Brewers professional baseball team.

"I think deep down we knew eventually we'd leave the city, so we did a lot of things you'd do on vacation," Rex explained.

When children Amy, now 5, and Paul, 3, came

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the victim's 71-year-old brother, who lives in a small house next to the trailer.

"My son (Daryl) went to the bank that morning, but they (law enforcement officers) had told them (bank officials) not to tell anybody," said Jellison.

"He used to carry a lot of money with him, but when he came home from the VA hospital the last time, he started writing more checks," he said.

Jellison said his brother was hospitalized for about a week two or three months ago at the VA hospital in Iowa City for pneumonia.

A DCI spokesman said the investigation has led to Iowa City, but refused to say why. A source close to the probe, however, told The Gazette that while at the hospital, Jellison may have accidentally made it known he had money, or access to it, and that he was vulnerable to a robbery because he lived alone.

Jellison said the brutal slaying of his brother has him puzzled and concerned.

"Living here alone, I get pretty jumpy sometimes," said Jellison, whose wife, Ethel, has been in a nursing home for the past 4½ years after suffering a stroke.

Jellison said his brother moved to Blairstown about four years ago from Chicago, where he had been "a maintenance worker in two apartment houses owned by his wife. She's been dead for some time and they had no children," he said.

Jellison said he and his brother spent a lot of time together in recent years, going fishing almost daily and helping each other do yard work.

Amos didn't have a car and relied on Elmer to get him around. Also, Amos didn't have a telephone and Elmer often took calls for him.

"I have no idea of who would want to kill him. He never had an enemy in his life," said Jellison.

Jellison said the last time he saw his brother was about 4:30 the

afternoon of Aug. 2, a Sunday.

"He wanted to check on some drainage tile in a creek (near the trailer) so we went down. After that I had supper at Daryl's house and came back.

"About 8:30 when I was out picking up worms I heard the television going (in the trailer). There were no lights on, but he never turned no lights on. . . . There wasn't anything different that I could notice that night.

"I washed up about 10:05 and went to bed. Daryl came and got me about 2 and told me what had happened," he said.

Jellison said he thinks investigators believe the assailant "used the back door," which opens into a bedroom at the rear of the trailer, and clubbed his brother to death after he fell asleep watching television.

"They think they (the assailant) came up behind him and hit him while he was asleep in a chair. It was upset and there was a pool of blood.

"They think he didn't feel a thing, but must have had some kind of reaction because he kind of walked forward to the kitchen and collapsed," said Jellison.

Jellison believes whoever killed his brother knew Amos, and knows the family.

"We believe they (the assailant) may have called Daryl because his name is listed first in the phone book," said Jellison.

The caller reportedly told Daryl Jellison five times, "Amos is hurt, you'd better come."

Jellison said Daryl thought the caller "sounded like an older man."

Jellison said his brother could have been an easy victim for a burglar or robber because "he never kept his doors locked."

"Daryl and me used to tell him he'd better keep the doors locked, but he had a mind of his own and would say nobody was going to tell him what to do."



Gazette staff photo

The Iowa Security Medical Facility at Oakdale is in for a big expansion in the next few years. A plan has been authorized that would triple the capacity of the Johnson County facility, which can now house 106 prisoners. If all goes as backers hope, construction could begin in the fall of 1982.

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fence that's already there," Grossheim said.

"We'd be spending more than \$7 million if we had to purchase the land or start clearing land or using facilities that weren't already there.

The present facility is built in one corner of the fenced-in area, so the four guard towers will be there, we won't have to put up a fence, and we can use the kitchen facilities and also the combined gym and auditorium that's in the security hospital.

"Everybody who lives around the outside already knows it's a prison security hospital, and we wouldn't be enlarging it at all. So, I don't think there would be any big problem if the Legislature says 'go ahead.'"

Grossheim envisions construction of two 100-bed buildings, with one of the buildings organized into individual rooms and cells. The other, he said, would include four to six dormitories.

"We're still studying the reception center concept, but the idea is starting every inmate in Iowa at a reception center where his records and background information could be gathered and he could be given psychological and job and educational tests and a medical and dental exam right there," Grossheim said.

"By the time we have all this information, he can be further classified and perhaps sent to another institution. All this would be

done close to University Hospitals, which I see as providing all kinds of benefits and savings rather than driving people up and down the road to get specialized care and treatment. Plus, the Oakdale facility is right on Interstate 80, and almost any county sheriff could bring an inmate there as easily as the two places we're now using, Anamosa and Fort Madison.

"If we had one facility issuing the clothes and doing the physicals and the testing, we would have one that was doing it uniformly, rather than at two different locations, neither of which is really in the business of being a reception center, but that's all we've got.

"We think Oakdale would be a

good place, and we think we could do it with the 200 beds to be built there," Grossheim said. "We think it's a good idea to have most inmates confined in a medium-security reception area and then, from there, either go to a maximum or minimum security or some other medium-security facility in Iowa. It's a central location between Anamosa, Mount Pleasant and Fort Madison, and we think it would be a super place.

"But that part hasn't been approved yet, and we'll be taking the reception center concept before the Legislature at about the same time they go ahead with the plans to expand the Oakdale facility."

After-hours club legal, but finds few customers

By Beverly Geber
Clinton Herald staff writer

CLINTON (AP) — Perhaps there're too many private parties, or maybe there just isn't any interest, but Jeff Smith is finding that his new business — an after-hours public beer party — just isn't catching on.

Smith, who used to own and operate a tavern in Clinton, has had his new business open on weekends since early August.

But the response is so poor he may fold it this week.

And law enforcement officials wouldn't mind that a bit. Smith sent them scurrying to their law books when an advertisement appeared in the Clinton Herald three weeks ago announcing the opening of "Smitty's All New After-Hours Get Together."

The advertisement told patrons to bring their own beer to the "club," where admission was by nightly fee or by enrolling.

But it was the announcement of the hours of operation that sent officials thumbing through the Iowa Code. The business would be open from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

It was clearly a violation of an Iowa liquor license, which dictates liquor cannot be sold or served after

2 a.m., but the way Smith set it up, County Attorney G. Wylie Pillers III noted, "It appears legal."

Smith's liquor license to operate his former tavern expired Aug. 3 and wasn't renewed. Unfettered by the regulations that go with that license, Smith's new business was free to be open until 5 a.m. as long as he didn't sell beer and as long as the patrons brought no wine or liquor.

So arranged, the business became a public party.

"I see no difference between coming here and taking (the party) to somebody's residence," Smith said.

The idea of a public beer party caused the Clinton Police Department some anxiety. Police Chief Wayne Wilke refused to discuss Smith's new venture "because we're working on it." He did say the department has not received complaints or experienced problems with the new business.

Pillers said his office is investigating the legality of the establishment but has come to no conclusions.

But the lack of interest may preclude all that.

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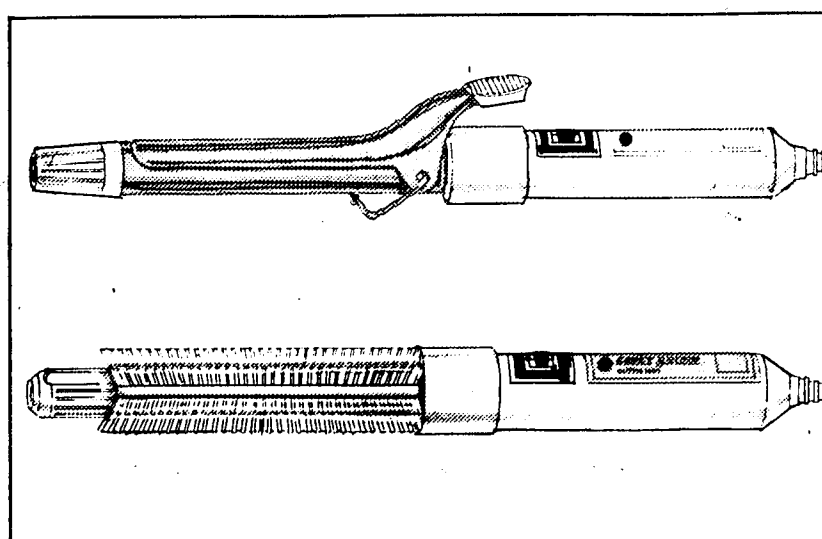
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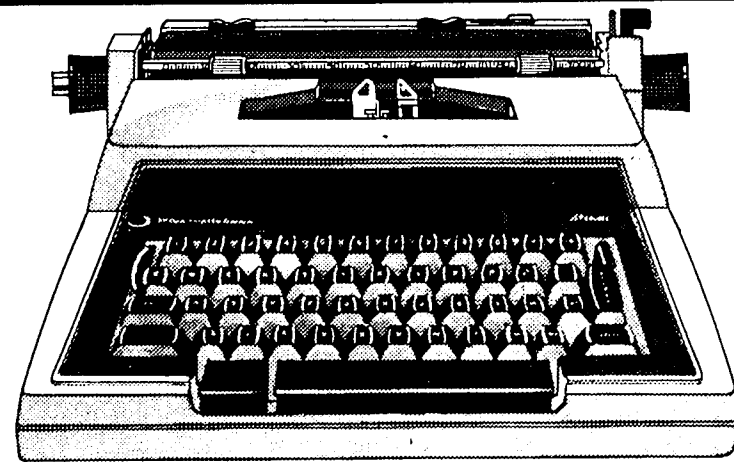
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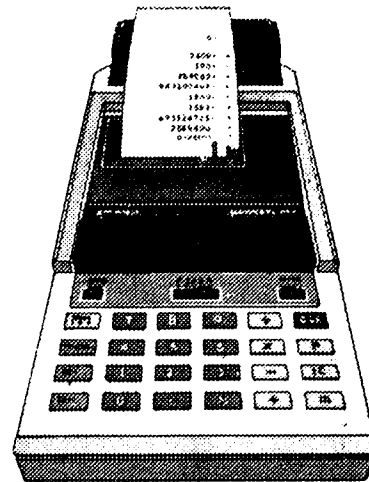
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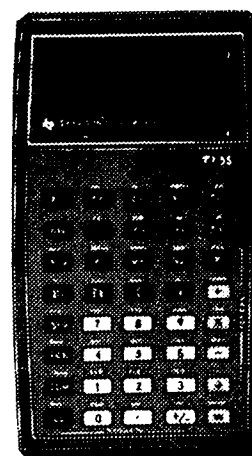


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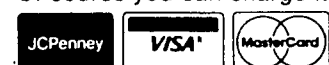
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