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Junior Miss

Franklin Parish title goes to Erin Brooks



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The boys...

Princess play opens Thursday

The Franklin Sun

Serving Franklin Parish Since 1856

MARCH 22, 2000

WINNSBORO, LA

VOL. 143 NO. 32 50 CENTS

Agents surround home of 'empress' Warrants served, documents seized

By Rod Strod
Sun Staff Writer

A small army of state and federal agents descended on Franklin Parish Tuesday morning and sealed off access to a home rented by Empress Verdane Washitaw Turner Gosston El-Bey, the self-proclaimed head of the Washitaw Moorish Nation.

Agents arrived before 8 a.m. by car, truck, and helicopter. Throughout the day Louisiana State Troopers provided tight security around the home, located east of Winnboro at 2567 Hwy 4 on the banks of the Bayou Macon.

Officials with the state police would not comment on the matter and referred all questions to U.S. Attorney William Flanagan in Shreveport, but a spokesman in Flanagan's office said Tuesday morning that he was out of the office and would not return until Wednesday.

The Franklin Sun has learned from sources believed to be both reliable and informed that federal agents were serving search warrants and seizing a variety of documents in connection with an on-going investigation regarding possible income tax evasion, mail fraud and wire fraud.

Agents were seen wheeling boxes from the home and loading them on a U-Haul truck.

The planned raid was a well-kept secret because Franklin Parish Sheriff Steve Pylant was apparently not informed of the raid until it was well underway.

Pylant appeared on the scene with Patrol Supervisor Charles Cureington around 8 a.m. but they were met at the end of the driveway by state and federal agents, and after a long conversation, they never approached or entered the house.

"They asked us not to say anything," Pylant said when asked to comment on the matter as he was leaving.

The empress has been apparently been renting the home in Franklin Parish for some three years.

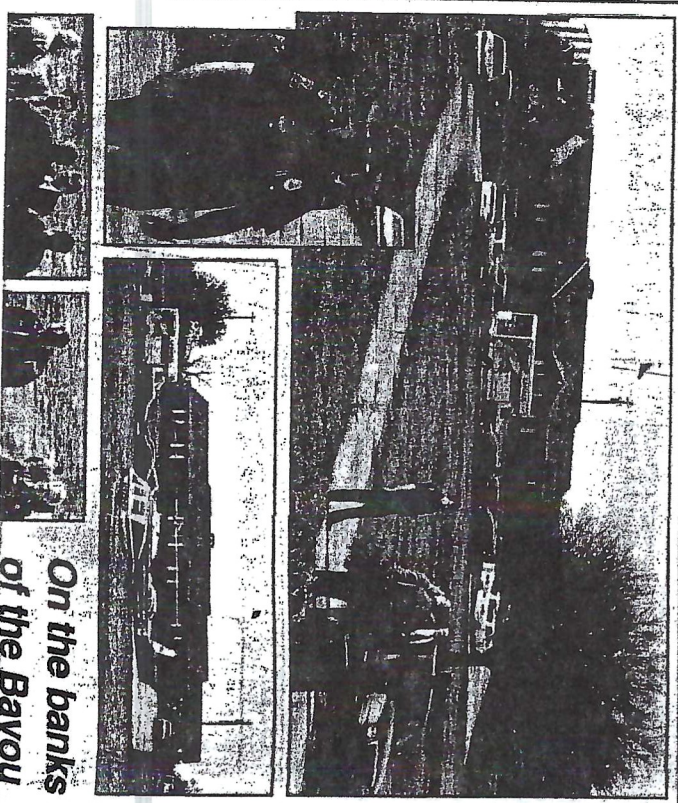
Though there was no indication that law enforcement officials anticipated any violence, the agents were visibly armed and on edge.

And at least one parish resident who lives several miles from the site of the Tuesday-morning raid, said he was advised by the FBI to stay indoors.

"I was outside just getting ready to mow the front yard, when a car pulled up and a man wearing an FBI jacket got out," the man said early Tuesday afternoon.

"He told me it would be better if I went inside and stayed there. I didn't know what was

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On the banks of the Bayou

Washington / where's court on 4.1.01

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Agents were seen wheeling boxes from the home and loading them on a U-Haul truck.

The planned raid was a well-kept secret because Franklin Parish Sheriff Steve Pylant was apparently not informed of the raid until it was well underway.

Pylant appeared on the scene with Patrol Supervisor Charles Cureington around 9 a.m. but they were met at the end of the driveway by state and federal agents, and after a long conversation, they never approached or entered the house.

On the banks of the Bayou Macon

This site some 10 miles east of Winnsboro was the scene of much activity Tuesday morning as state and federal agents surrounded a home leased by the Empress Verdane Washitaw Turner Goslin, El-Bey. Agents entered the home and removed boxes of material, which was then loaded inside a truck parked outside. (Sun photos by Monica Huff)

Board interview for superinte

Final vote set for April

By Leslie Young
Editor

And then there were three. By Thursday evening's reception and interviews for Franklin Parish school superintendent, the field of six candidates had dropped to three — Leo Thornhill Jr., Lee McDonald and James Carpenter.

Dropping out of the running were Franklin Parish

responses to one teacher's question about whether or not the matter was a "done deal."

"We have not made any decision yet," Mercer said.

Interviews were conducted in a closed-door session lasting about three and one-half hours. The board members asked the three candidates the same 13 questions, including their ideas for

Council views changes for town, employees

degree from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 1974, his master's in education from NLU in 1978 and his plus-30 from NLU in 1990 and 30 hours above the master's degree from NLU in 1991.

Leo Thornhill Jr. of Winnsboro is Franklin Parish's supervisor of elementary education and personnel, a position he has held since 1994. His education career began in the classroom at Crowley High in 1973. He also taught at Winnsboro Lower, where he served as assistant principal for a number of years.

Thornhill was named principal of Fort Necessity High in 1986, a position he held until he assumed his post as supervisor.

He is a 1969 graduate of Winnsboro High and received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from NLU in 1973. He obtained his master's of education degree in 1975 and plus-30 from NLU in 1982.

10 days per year, and if they don't take it, they lose it. This policy, you will have people calling in sick." Persons also asked the council to consider the

FBI

from page 1A

going on, but I didn't ask any questions. I did what he said. I still don't know what is going on."

In an interview with The Franklin Sun in 1997, the empress, then 70, explained her goals of leading her people to "live happy and not have to pay taxes."

The empress said she has a legal claim to land contained in 25 parishes in northeast Louisiana, including

Franklin. She claims to be empress of the Washitaw and plates and passports. The paper also stated that the nation was in the process of "chartering its own bank and printing its own money backed by natural resources."

A newspaper published by the Washitaw nation advertises a variety of benefits available to members of the Washitaw nation, for a price. These include certificates of live birth, international motorist certification to replace the state-

issued driver's license, Washitaw auto registrations and plates and passports.

Prior to assuming the title of "empress," Goston served as mayor of the small town of Richwood, near Monroe, in the early 1980s.

Welcome...

BUSINESSES IN

Winnsboro are being encouraged to use their signs to promote the Cleanest City Contest and to welcome the judges of the event. The judges have scheduled their Winnsboro stop for 11 a.m. Tuesday, March 28, at the gazebo. Local organizers are asking the public to turn out to welcome the judges.



Westerburg Auto Service

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Wiffare & Thonats

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Trash Bash

Winnsboro, Wisner
clean up community



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Tribute

Terry Poe salute
planned



The Franklin Sum

Serving Franklin Parish Since 1856

MARCH 29, 2000

WINNSBORO, LA.

VOL. 143 NO. 33

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Board vote Set Monday

The Franklin Parish School Board will choose a superintendent during its meeting Monday night.

The school board will meet at 5:30 p.m. Monday and, by a "show of hands," they will select one of the three candidates for the top post in the school system.

The three candidates are Leo Thornhill of Winnsboro, Lee McDonald of Rayville and James Carpenter of Sibley Island.

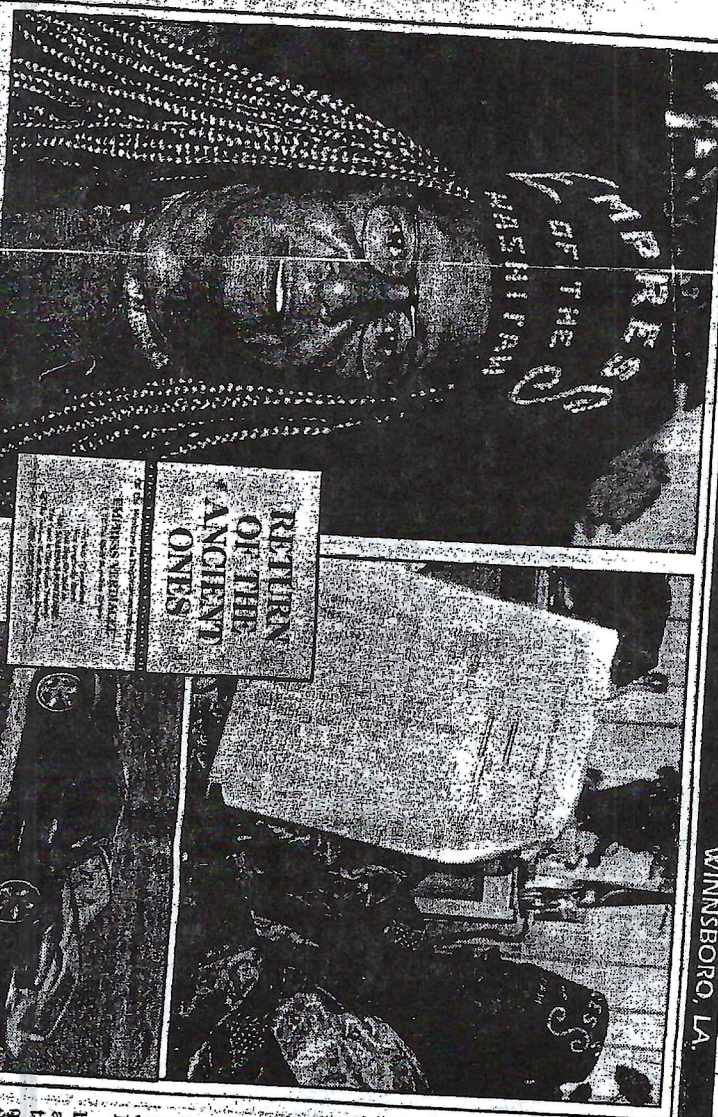
Interviews were conducted behind closed doors March 16 after a public reception for the candidates. The board questioned the candidates on their ideas for improving curriculum, teacher morale and the financial status of the system, along with their ideas and "vision" for the future of Franklin Parish school.

During last week's agenda meeting, the board decided that each candidate's name will be called, in alphabetical order, with a "yes or nay" vote by all board members. Four votes are required for selection.

Board member Jan Bland placed "school board salary" on the agenda for the Monday meeting. She said she plans to propose salary reductions for board members who miss meetings.

Board members are paid \$350 per month, with the president receiving \$400 per month. Bland said she is proposing a deduction of \$25 for any special meetings missed, \$50 for a missed agenda meeting and \$100 for missing a regular monthly meeting.

Also on the agenda are discussions of school uniforms



RETURN OF THE ANCIENT ONES



VERDACCIE HAMPTON GOSTON self-proclaimed "Mormon" Goston also rolled out the prototype of an autobiography of the West in the Dugan community, said one, the West in 2000, which she said would be produced in off my land. "I'm going to put them (the government) Franklin Parish. Displayed in center photo is her book which by then which she said identified her as the real leader of the Mormons and Mississippi. (Sun photos by Monica Huff)

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EMPRESS

from page 1A

tion from NLU in Louisiana State University in 1967, his master's in education administration and supervision from NLU in 1990 and 30 hours above the master's degree from NLU in 1991.

Leo Thornhill Jr. of Winnsboro is Franklin Parish's supervisor of elementary education and personnel. In addition, he has held a position he has held since 1994. His education career began in the classroom at Crowley High in 1973. He also taught at Winnsboro Lower, where he served as assistant principal for a number of years.

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He is a 1969 graduate of Winnsboro High and received his bachelor's degree in elementary education from NLU in 1973. He obtained his master's of education degree in 1976 and plus 30 from NLU in 1982.

brooch and jewelry boxes are gone. Why did they take my jewelry? The jewelry didn't do anything wrong."

Goston confirmed Wednesday that agents had seized a variety of documents available to people who seek citizenship in the Washington, Washington, passports, marriage licenses, drivers' licenses and birth certificates are available for purchase by Washington citizens.

Goston did not say Wednesday how much such documents could cost, but previous reports have indicated that full citizenship in the Washington nation could cost as much as \$520 per person.

"They are as the stars in the sky," Goston said, when asked about the number of people claiming citizenship in the Washington nation.

Goston said federal agents were acting illegally when they searched her home.

"This is not in the United States," she said, adding that

she would not honor a court summons issued by the federal courts.

"I would go to parish court because I know the people who live there," Goston said, "but I will not go to federal court."

Goston said she had been offered sanctuary by the Mormons.

"The Mormons brought this to me," she said, holding up a document which she said recognized her as the head of the Mormons.

"They have offered me shelter in one of their granite mountains."

But Goston said she had no intention of running away from conflict with the government.

"The people on this continent deserve something better than they have gotten," Goston said, adding that the government "should give back all the money that they have collected."

Goston said she intended to stay right where she is.

"And there ain't a damn thing they can do about it," she said, apologizing for her use of profanity.

Goston said that while she had no prior warning about Tuesday's raid on her home by federal agents, she was not surprised at the government's tactics.

"Who do you think these people are?" she asked. "Who do you think these people are?"

"They killed the Branch Davidians in Waco and still try to make it out to be a lie. Didn't they shoot a woman right out from under her baby at Ruby Ridge? Didn't they kill Jim Jones and his people? That wasn't a suicide."

"Didn't they murder my husband?"

"They are murderers." According to reliable sources close to the investigation, Goston's residence in Franklin Parish has been under surveillance for several months by both state and federal agencies.

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APPLIANCES