

## Entrepreneur Blum visits court again in search of dream for sports arena

By ESTON MELTON  
Herald Staff Writer

Irrepressible Merrill A. Blum, better known as Mel, the cocksure entrepreneur who promised Miami an indoor sports arena but didn't deliver, went to court again Thursday.

He wore a rumpled brown trenchcoat over a soiled white shirt. He needed a shave, but brought a make-up mirror with rows of tiny lights and an electric razor with him. While his lawyer argued in the judge's chambers, he cleaned up, tucked in his shirttail and put on a tie in the men's room.

Blum is suing Belcher Yacht Inc. in Dade Circuit Court. He signed a contract to buy Belcher's shipyard, at 1501 NW 23rd Ave. on the Miami River, and wants Judge Thomas Testa to make Belcher turn it over.

Belcher's attorney says the company is willing to sell. But company officials want to see Blum's money first — \$2.95 million worth. Blum says he has the cash.

He also has a dream, the same one he shared with enthusiastic local officials

**'He didn't have the money. He produced nothing.'**

Eugene Stearns

in mid-1978 for an indoor arena where professional basketball and ice-hockey teams would delight South Florida's sports-starved fans.

Blum, a self-styled real estate "hypothecator," promised to build his \$35-million arena on a 14.5-acre riverfront site just west of S. Miami Avenue. But by early 1979, his own financial troubles mounting, Blum's arena deal collapsed.

The dream lives on, though. Only the location has moved upriver.

Blum wants to build a 23,000-seat arena on Belcher's 9.4 acres. And he said he wants to give it to the city of Miami free of charge.

In return, Blum said he wants city of-

ficials to sign a management contract that would permit Blum and his heirs to operate the arena for all time.

Blum signed a contract with Belcher officials on March 10. The total purchase price: \$3 million. Blum put down a \$50,000 deposit. Belcher still has it. At closing, Blum was to produce the balance.

Closing was set for April 22. "Time is of the essence," the contract said.

Blum failed to show for the closing, and thereby breached his contract, says Eugene Stearns, Belcher's attorney. Carl Lida, Blum's attorney, says Belcher agreed orally to postpone the closing until the following week.

"We have a back-up contract," Stearns said after the court hearing, "but it's not for as much money. Mr. Blum breached his contract, but we said, 'If you can ever produce the money, let's talk.' Mr. Blum called and said he had the money, so we arranged another meeting.

"That closing failed, too. He didn't have the money. He produced nothing."

Richard Hays, Blum's personal attor-

ney, was at the closing. He said Blum did bring the money — in the form of a personal check.

The money needed for closing is not the only problem. There's also disagreement over the shipyard's recent fire.

In between, the two closings, a fire broke out at one of the Belcher buildings. Damage totaled about \$100,000, but insurance will cover it, Stearns said.

Blum says he asked for and was refused a guarantee by Belcher to cover the fire loss. "What if the insurance won't cover it?" asked Lida, his attorney.

To resolve the disputes, Blum filed suit. He wants Belcher's other prospective buyer blocked from closing on the property. He wants Belcher ordered to sell to him.

Testa gave Blum until high noon Monday to produce the cash and close. If he fails, Belcher could sell to the other buyer. If he closes, the money will be held in escrow until Testa could hold a hearing to determine the affect of the fire's damage.

Then Blum could start work on his arena.



JOE RIMKUS / Miami Herald Staff

Mel Blum: No one wanted his check.

### Charles Whited



## Witness Jones on front lines of crime war

Most of us are conditioned to think of courage as the performance of brave deeds which, even in the doing of them, are so acknowledged and draw the plaudits of an admiring public.

We think of collective deeds. Our heroes are men at war, fighting in armies at the front, or astronauts hurled into space, or brave public servants risking life in the performance of duty.

And indeed all of these things are fine and noble.

But the real courage, the hardest, meanest, toughest kind to exercise, is to stand alone for a principle when your peers despise you for it and the world is looking the other way.

Doris Jones, prosecution witness, knows what it's like.

I've been a newspaperman for 27 years. I can think of no greater bravery than that shown by this woman.

Doris Jones, age 33, black, herself a product of the Liberty City where her ordeal had its beginnings, defied threats and intimidation that silenced countless others to do what she felt was right.

She became, and still is, the state's prime witness to the grisly riot murders of three white youths in Liberty City last May.

As a result, she lost her home, her husband, her job and was vilified as a traitor by many of her own race. She was forced to live in hiding, where she remains to this day.

Last weekend I wrote the story of Doris Jones. Public response since then has come in many letters and phone calls.

Her teeth were bad and she had no money to fix them. A dentist is now doing the work without charge. There have been offers of jobs and a place to live. Some people, unsolicited, sent money.

Many readers see inspiration in her example.

"Doris Jones is a wonderful citizen and deserves a Medal of Honor for her devotion to what is right," writes Dr. Earl Herron, physician, of Bay Harbor Islands. "Unfortunately, the moral fiber of most Americans is practically nil."

Paul Kemp, of Cooper City, a veteran of more than 20 years in military service with combat in World War II and Korea, had this to say: "To be brave in combat is one thing; but to stand absolutely alone day after day in defense of principles which no other person will defend is, to me, almost incredible."

One white woman in Opa-Locka wrote that since the riots she has had fear and animosity toward black people generally, but that the example of Doris Jones has changed her attitude.

And Otis W. Shiver of Miami sees Jones as a challenge to us all and the salvation of a justice system sorely weak:

"We must see that the system works as it was intended . . . or we will lose it by default. Without witnesses there can be no trial, without trial no justice, and without justice no freedoms."

Funds for Doris Jones are being handled, incidentally, by the Citizens Crime Commission of Greater Miami, 5220 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, Fla. 33137, telephone 756-0584.

I talked with Jones Thursday and informed her that some people were responding with money gifts. She said she was grateful but money is not among her chief concerns.

"What touches me is to know that people do care," she told me. "I thought I was all by myself, and now I know that I'm not alone; that a whole lot of people do care. And that's all I need."



JOE RIMKUS JR. / Miami Herald Staff

### Puppy love

The eyes of this beseeching puppy in a cage are upon you during "Be Kind to Animals Week." He is just one of 250 dogs and cats begging to be adopted at Dade County Animal Services, 7401 NW 74th St. The shelter

is open to pet-seekers Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

## Dade pulls animal-farm drug raid

By ANDY ROSENBLATT  
Herald Staff Writer

Heavily armed Metro detectives drove past caged gorillas, lions, monkeys and giraffes Thursday morning as they broke up a major drug ring which allegedly operated inside a Florida City exotic animal farm.

Ten persons including Miami Police Officer Samuel Streiner were arrested as a result of the Metro Organized Crime Bureau (OCB) investigation. Streiner, a 16-year police veteran, was arrested by Miami officers when he reported for work Thursday.

Last month, Streiner was detained by federal narcotics agents as he carried \$79,000 through a New York airport terminal. Metro detectives said Thursday that Streiner served as a courier for

**'We have broken a major narcotics organization which may be responsible for several drug-related homicides.'**

Arthur Nehrass

the ring and provided its members with help in detecting undercover police activities.

Two other persons are still being sought by Metro detectives including Samuel Dennis of Coral Gables and Mario Tabraue, the alleged leader of the drug ring.

Tabraue is the president of Florida City Exotic Animals Inc. which operated the farm where several alleged members of the narcotics ring lived. He is also the son of Guillermo Tabraue, a well-known Little Havana businessman

and political figure who was once listed as an informant with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Thursday's arrests conclude the first phase of a month-long investigation of the ring which may be linked to several drug-related murders, police said.

During the probe, the ring's members successfully jammed police radios and broke up several police stakeouts but were apparently unaware of the wiretap Metro police had placed on Ta-

braue's telephone.

"We have broken a major narcotics organization which may be responsible for several drug-related homicides," OCB Commander Arthur F. Nehrass said, in announcing Thursday's raid.

Nehrass refused to identify which murders may be linked to the ring. Metro detectives were reportedly studying the possibility the narcotics ring is responsible for the shooting death of Tabraue's wife Marie.

## Per-call fees ringing no bells with phone company customers

By EARNI YOUNG  
Herald Consumer Writer

South Florida residents want to reach out and touch someone, but not if they have to pay for it by the minute.

And they're afraid that's exactly what they'll have to do if the Public Service Commission allows Southern Bell to offer local measured telephone service (LMS) to customers who make only a few local calls a month. The optional plan is part of the company's request for a \$288.3 million rate increase.

LMS works much like long distance. Users

would be charged for each local call based on the length, distance and time it is made. However, users who remained within an allowed number of message units would pay a cheaper rate than unlimited service customers.

But thousands of customers have picked up their phones to say they don't want any part of LMS — optional or otherwise.

PSC offices in Dade and Broward have received more than 3,011 phone calls against LMS since January. Another 1,853 opponents have called the Tallahassee office. Fewer than 10 callers have been in favor of the plan.

### Officer awarded \$50,000 back pay

A 50-year-old police officer won an 18-year-old struggle with Metro this week when an appellate court ruled he deserves \$50,000 back pay in a dispute over his rank. Thomas Brodie, a former bomb squad officer now with Metro's crime scene unit, may also be awarded interest in the case, which his attorney said could raise the sum to more than \$100,000.

## Fund for victims is studied

**Witness expenses would be paid**

By JOE OGLESBY  
Herald Staff Writer

Tourists who are mugged, robbed, or otherwise victimized by crime should be given expense-paid trips back to Miami to testify in court, a task force on crime and tourism recommended Thursday.

"Street people are very smart," said Jim McDonnell, president of Crime Watch of Miami Beach. "They know a guy on a vacation isn't going to come back from London. He couldn't afford it even if he wanted to."

McDonnell and other members of the task force suggested establishing a \$100,000 witness fund as an inducement to victimized tourists.

The money for the fund would be contributed by the local tourism agencies that are members of the Greater Miami Tourist Coalition. It would be supplemented with free rooms and airfare from hotels and airlines, said Peter Weiner, president of the task force and executive director of the Tourist Development Council.

Setting up a witness fund was one of several ideas the task force weighed Thursday, but it was the one they decided was the most important in combating the image that Miami is crime-ridden.

"If you look at the statistics, Miami is not Dodge City, U.S.A. It is not a shooting gallery," McDonnell said.

More than 50 per cent of the murders in Dade are related to drug activities and a substantial portion of the remainder stem from domestic arguments, he said. Only a small proportion of the crimes here actually involve tourists.

The problem is one of perception, he said. Miami's image is that of a town plagued by violence.

"What we've got to do is get the truth out. And the truth is that what happens here, happens all over the world. Take away the drugs and Miami is just like any other place."

Establishing a witness fund would be a highly visible sign to criminals and tourists that Miami is serious about resolving the crime issue, said Weiner.

In fact, said Dade Aviation Director Dick Judy, the psychological impact of the fund would far outweigh the amount itself.

Knowing that victims will return to testify will change the minds of some criminals, said Judy.

Task force members also said they would "pressure" local newspapers not to publish listings of police reports in neighborhood editions such as The Herald's Neighbors sections. These reports "red flag" certain neighborhoods as crime-plagued, McDonnell said.

Other suggestions include coordinating security techniques with hotels, police and tourist groups, and setting up information booths for tourists.

Task force recommendations will be submitted to the Greater Miami Tourism Coalition, a group that includes tourism representatives from Miami, Miami Beach, Dade County, Bal Harbour and Surfside.



## Gunman slays 4, wounds 20

### Tavern patrons subdue man, 25, as he reloads

By the Associated Press

Salem, Ore.—A man who "didn't say nothing" walked into a crowded rock 'n' roll bar and opened fire with an automatic pistol, killing four persons and wounding at least 20 others before he was wrestled to the floor by customers.

At least four of those shot Thursday night at the Oregon Museum bar, a few blocks from the state Capitol on the city's northeast side, were in critical condition, authorities said.

Police arrested Lawrence W. Moore, 25, of Lyons, Ore., on charges of first-degree murder, Sgt. Gary Kinsman said. Moore was scheduled for arraignment today. No motive was established, police said.

"He didn't say nothing. He just opened the door and started firing," said Brent Yagle, a patron at the popular night spot frequented mostly by young people in their 20s. About 100 patrons were inside the one-story, wood-paneled nightclub.

"I didn't think the shots were real until I saw people dropping," Yagle said.

As about 30 persons danced to the music of Jenny and The Jeans, the man fired his first shot toward the bar, patrons said. They said he then turned his weapon—described by police as a 9mm Luger automatic—toward the crowd, sending patrons diving under tables and running toward rest rooms.

Others grabbed bar towels to help the wounded, witnesses said.

Kinsman said the gunman "fired multiple rounds" and apparently reloaded at least twice.

"During one of the lulls in shooting, the gunman was jumped by one patron, immediately joined by several other patrons, who were able to subdue him," Kinsman said.

At least four persons tackled the gunman, who did not resist, witnesses told police. They said one patron hit the gunman on the head with a pool cue, and another grabbed his gun.

"The first thing I did was grab for the gun," said Ashley Mitchell, one of the customers who subdued the gunman. "I struck him four times on the head."

"We have no idea of the motive at this point," Kinsman said. "It's still pretty much in a turmoil."

The names of the victims were not immediately released.

At least 10 ambulances were called in from surrounding communities to take the injured to Salem Hospital, Kinsman said. Relatives swarmed to the hospital as news of the shooting spread.

## Panel opposes school lunch cutback

By the Associated Press

Washington—The Senate Agriculture Committee appears certain to meet President Reagan's 1982 spending target for food stamps despite its rejection of an administration proposal to reduce benefits for families whose children receive free school lunches.

"I don't believe we have to rubber stamp any administration... if there are legitimate budget savings elsewhere," said Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan.

Reagan wanted to reduce food stamps to families in the school lunch program to save at least \$500 million a year. Although vigorously backed by the committee chairman, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., the proposal was defeated by a 14-3 vote.

But the committee went along Thursday with other changes Reagan proposed for the food stamp program, including a "workfare" plan that states can adopt at their option.

If "workfare" is used by all states, as many as 2 million of the 23 million recipients of food stamps could be required to work for them, the administration says.

The panel already had endorsed Reagan's proposed higher eligibility requirements, which would eliminate 1 million

higher-income people from the program and cut benefits for millions more with incomes above the poverty line.

With cost-saving measures of its own, the committee seems certain to adopt a bill that next year would save at least \$1.6 billion, a figure the Congressional Budget Office says is needed to meet likely spending targets.

Among the cost-trimming actions were postponement of various benefit adjustments due to inflation and pro-rating the value of food stamps for the first month they are issued. The committee also made substantial cuts in benefits for Puerto Rico, where 58 percent of the population receives food stamps.

"This is a tough issue, food stamps," Dole said. He said the committee's action "is a recognition that you can't cut the heart out of the program. There are other federal programs."

After successfully leading the attack against the school lunch cutback, Dole won an even closer 10-7 vote against reinstating a requirement that food stamp recipients pay some part of their income for benefits. It was repealed four years ago, and the administration declined to take sides Thursday.

Helms, who pushed the "workfare" proposal, said he

hopes it will be mandatory in the future.

"Out there with all welfare programs, there's a sophistication for beating the game," Helms said. "It's a question of whether we're going to tighten this program up."

Under "workfare," people age 18 to 60 would be required to work in public service jobs to earn their food stamps. They would have to work however many hours it took at the minimum wage to earn the stamps, but no one would work more than 40 hours a week in any combination of jobs.

Incapacitated people and those caring for children under 6 years old would be exempt. States also would have the authority to expand exemptions.

Based on results from seven pilot "workfare" projects around the country, John Bode of the Agriculture Department said, "We're finding workfare to be marginally cost-effective."

"It is not viewed by the administration as a budget savings item," Bode said. "But it is viewed as an improvement to the program image."

He said some studies show that those required to work "are more apt to find better employment and more apt to go off the program for other reasons."

## Wild animal firm linked to a narcotics ring

By the Associated Press

Florida City, Fla.—An animal sales outlet for giraffes, lions and monkeys was the headquarters of a major drug ring that may have been involved in several killings in the Miami area, police say.

A Miami police officer and 10 other persons are being held on narcotics charges after they were arrested Thursday, some of them at Florida City Exotic Animals Inc., by Dade County police.

"We have broken a major narcotics organization which may be

responsible for several drug-related homicides," said Arthur F. Nehrbass, commander of the county's Organized Crime Bureau.

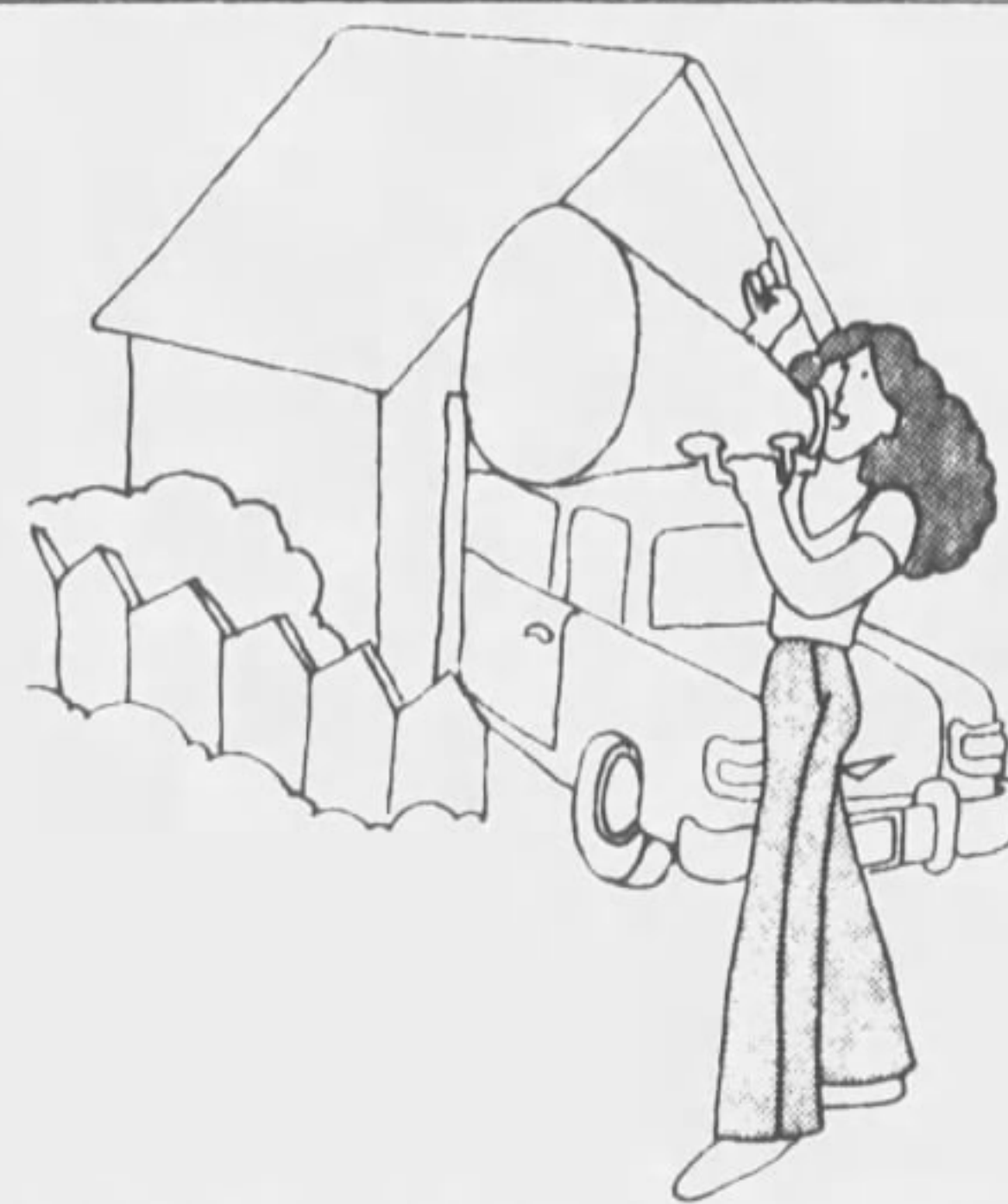
Officer Samuel Streiner, a 16-year veteran of the city police department, was arrested when he reported for work Thursday. Detectives said Streiner is accused of being a courier for the ring and helping members detect undercover police activities.

Detectives said ring members successfully jammed police radios and broke up several police stakeouts during the month-long

investigation, but apparently were unaware of a wiretap on a telephone at the animal outlet.

Police spokesman Ron Sorensen identified the others taken into custody as Mario Tabraue, president of the exotic animal outlet; James Brown, Raymond Ostrand, Jose Acosta, Luis Flaco, Michael Toren, Karen Matherly, Wesley Matherly, Wendy Lazar and Tony Munio. A 12th person is being sought.

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