



Grand Jurors' Journal

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President's Message

CGJA's 2004 Training Seminars are off to an excellent start with 429 new grand jurors registered for four separate seminars as of late July. We expect our 2004 seminars will be setting all time high attendance records. Our first ever workshop for Forepersons and Pro Tems, held prior to the Sacramento Training Seminar, was a real success with 29 counties represented and close to 50 in attendance.

We thank Sherry Chesny, Training Committee Chair and Betty Mattea, Chair of the Subcommittee for Foreperson Training and the many dedicated volunteers involved in this year's four seminars and new foreperson workshop.

I am pleased to announce and welcome Nevada County as CGJA's 9th county chapter. Richard Hanson will be the Nevada County Chapter President supported by three officers and three directors-at-large in the management of this new chapter

Since the Journal's last issue, our Los Angeles County Chapter elected Carol Hatcher and our Marin County Chapter elected Owen Haxton as their new Presidents. We congratulate and welcome these new leaders and look forward to working with them in support of grand juries in their respective counties.

CGJA's 2004-second quarter financials closed with assets in excess of \$36,000. Our expenses to budget were on target at 99.6% while our income to budget was off at 73% due to annualizing revenue flow from membership dues. Membership dues are coming in strong during July and we expect 3rd quarter income to exceed budgets.

Clif Poole and his 2004 Annual Conference team are hard at work on this year's conference in Fairfield. Conference registration forms have been mailed to hundreds of CGJA members and supporters and we recommend early sign ups for special hotel room rates.

The Board of Directors 4th Annual Retreat will be held on October 13 and 14 immediately prior to our Annual Conference. Directors and Director Nominees will be invited to this year's retreat as ballots for the election of new Directors will not be counted until the start of the Annual Conference at 1:30 p.m. on October 14th. All expenses for Board retreats are supported directly by personal contributions from those attending the retreat.

Once a new Board of Directors is determined by election results, a special meeting of the new board will be held at approximately 5:30 p.m. on October 14th to elect new association officers, who will serve until the 2006 Annual Conference.

I encourage new and renewing members to send their 2004-05 dues in by August 31 to be eligible to vote for CGJA Directors. While we continue to create and administer with all volunteer support, our expanding list of new programs requires increased financial support for our communications and program materials. We invited all members and supporters to consider additional donations to support CGJA's financial needs. Donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged by our Treasurer. Thank you again for your continuing support and please feel free to contact me directly if you have association concerns or desire to become more active in supporting CGJA.

Elwood Moger
August 3, 2004

Summary of Board Actions

The CGJA Board of Directors took the following actions at their May 24, 2004 Board meeting:

- Ratified appointment of 2004 Nomination Committee.
- Approved special timeline for election of Directors.
- Approved invitation to the Board retreat for all sitting Directors and all nominees.
- Directed President to form a Work Group to update Syllabus for Grand Jurors a generic handbook for free distribution to all grand juries.
- A recommendation by the Training Committee " that remaining La Verne DVDs not be sold or distributed in any manner" failed.
- A recommendation by the Operations Committee to incorporate La Verne DVDs into the publications inventory and offered for sale at \$25.00 per copy carried. It was approved that "the Board rescind in its entirety the 10/17/ 03 report to membership; that its contents be disregarded; and no further action be taken to the membership."

Conference Transcripts Available

2003 Conference Transcript Available

The complete transcript of our 2003 Annual Meeting in Ventura is now available on our website or may be ordered through our Publications Clearing House.

Thanks to Boyd Horne, San Luis Obispo County, for his tireless effort to edit a stenographers literal transcript to a readable document.

The latest Grand Jury Report Index is also on line and available in hard copy.

Jerry Lewi
2003 Conference Chair and Webmaster.

Quarterly Financials

June 30, 2004

The June Balance Sheet and Statement of Revenues & Expenditures were acknowledged and filed at the Board's July 29 meeting.

As of June 30, assets totaled \$36,364 of which \$6,068 is restricted funds for designated purposes, actual revenues totaled \$5917 against expenses of \$11,379. Income was 73% of budget vs. expenses at 99.6% of budget. We were fortunate to exceed our unrestricted contributions budget by 216% but net income fell short base on annualizing our membership dues revenue in the 2004 budget.

It is expected that training and membership dues revenues will show substantial increases in the third quarter.

Jails vs. Public Prisons

By Jack Zepp

Grand jurors frequently ask what the difference is between "jails" and "public prisons" as relates to Penal Code § 919. It is a good question with no definite and clear answer. The usual reason the question arises is because someone wants to know if a grand jury **must** investigate a jail under § 919c or has the discretion to do so but only if it wants to under § 925 (county operations). Conversely sometimes someone wants to know how a grand jury can investigate a state prison when their authority is otherwise limited to local governments.

All of § 919 seems to have been authored at the same time and enacted at the same time (originally in 1872 as § 923) so it seems logical that when the statute refers to "jail of the county" in the first sentence and "public prisons within the county" in the second the author and enactors meant the words to mean two different things. I believe the authors specifically meant to create a (rare) authority to inquire into a state operation by using the "public prisons within the county" language (as also appears in § 921). I also recall doing some research years ago that led me to conclude that in 1872 generally a jail was exclusively a temporary holding facility pending trial and upon conviction one went to prison (state) not jail. In fact, the 1896 jail in the city in which I live still exists and consists of an outdoor 10 x 10 steel cage made of open weave 1" iron straps, clearly a temporary holding cell.

I believe it is clear that "public prisons" cannot include federal prisons because the state has no authority to subject those prisons to grand jury review. Another ambiguity is where city jails fit in. Clearly they may be inspected under § 925a (city operations), in which case a report must be written, but I wonder why there is no authority, such as § 919a provides for county jails, for the grand jury to inquire into the case of unindicted persons imprisoned in city jails?

Lastly, there is a question relating to youth facilities. County juvenile halls pose no problem because they are county operations and may be investigated as such under § 925. But California Youth Authority facilities are state operations. Are they subject to mandatory inquiry as “public prisons” pursuant to § 919b? Arguably they were set up on the reform school model and not intended to be seen as incarceration facilities. However, in at least one county a court has ruled that if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck it is a duck and has allowed the grand jury to investigate the CYA facility in its county.

California has experimented with state prisons run by private corporations. I wonder if grand juries have any authority or responsibility with respect to them? In other words, does the “public” in “public prisons” refers to who owns and runs the prison or who is in it?

CGJA Membership

Thanks to all of you who have sent in your new or renewal membership to CGJA. Our membership base continues to grow at a healthy rate and formation of new county chapters is on the increase. We welcome Nevada County as our newest chapter. We have been sending membership interest forms out to all of our members and things are starting to come together with our efforts to involve more of our membership in the activities of CGJA. This is providing us with some excellent talent. We have created a chapter group that meets following every CGJA Board of Directors meeting, which has helped us to direct our energy in a more productive manner. Our primary direction remains the same, educate the public about the benefits of a Grand Jury System so they may help us to improve and protect it. It is important to remember that without your support as a member of CGJA we cannot accomplish our goals. We must speak as one representing many in order to be heard through the halls of Sacramento. Again, thank you for your continued participation, dedication and support.

New CGJA Chapter Recognized

With submittal of bylaws and election of officers/directors, the CGJA Board of Directors granted recognition to a new Nevada County Chapter. The new chapter's President is Richard Hanson, who you can reach at: 530-272-8784. I extend a warm welcome to Richard and his new team of officers/directors made up of Ralph Sawvell, Bill Barnett, Marvell Herren, Deb Heller, Ray Hoffman, and Diane Masini. Members of this new chapter will be providing support to our 2004 Sacramento Training Seminar. It is good to have this newest group as part of the CGJA family and we thank them for their early and active contributions to the Association.

Chapter News

I welcome and congratulate two new Chapter Presidents, Carol Hatcher, 310-286-2210 has been elected President of our Los Angeles County Chapter and Owen Haxton, 415-883-3275 has been elected President of our Marin County Chapter.

Clif Poole CGJA Membership Relations Chair

San Francisco Chapter Year End Report

In the June Journal I reviewed the activities of the SF Chapter's very active first eight months, which included publicizing the grand jury to various community groups, interviewing applicants, and a lot of writing and rewriting of bylaws, manuals, etc.

Chapter members who participated in interviewing applicants expressed great enthusiasm for the experience. It seemed very helpful to the prospective jurors as well as assisting the Presiding Judge.

The Orientation Committee presented a program for applicants at which the Presiding Judge spoke briefly, a representative of the City Attorney's office outlined the financial disclosure requirements, the newly revised manual was distributed, and members of the committee addressed various aspects of their own grand jury experience.

The committee held another session immediately after impanelment of jurors, which alternates also attended, covering such topics as the actual mechanics of a grand jury and how San Francisco government works. Three former forepersons met separately with the newly chosen foreperson, as did a former Pro Tem with the person selected as the new jury's secretary.

Since the CGJA training doesn't occur in our area until a month and a half into the term, SF Chapter members felt it was important to help the new jury know how to get started, while also encouraging all to attend the invaluable formal training put on by the California Grand Jurors' Association in Concord in mid-August.

The SF Chapter is unanimous in believing that the support of Judge Hitchens made all the difference in its successful first year. She is enthusiastic and supportive and believes the chapter's work enhances the grand jury process.

The Chapter is starting its second year with energy and excitement. Plans include forming a Continuity Committee with a liaison to the sitting jury if its members so wish and composing an op-ed piece for the local paper demystifying the grand jury to the public (and the media), as well as an expanded outreach program in the ongoing search for as diversified a jury as humanly possible.

By Serena Bardell

Solano Chapter News

The Solano County Chapter is proud to be hosting the 23rd annual CGJA Conference this year. It is shaping up to be one of the most exciting and well-planned events. Our area has an array of interesting sights and vacation possibilities and we hope will appeal not only to grand Jurors attending the conference but spouses and friends as well.

The chapter is sponsoring again the 2004 training seminar at the Concord Hilton Hotel Inn Contra Costa County. This is the 3rd training seminar and once again chapter members provided support by staffing the registration table, coordinate classroom and provide timers. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks and gratitude to all my helpers as I could not have done it without you.

Wanda Kiger - Tucker, President

Legal Committee Report

Senate Bill 1673 (Romero) which I discussed in the April edition of the Journal has been put on hold by the author. At the time of this writing (mid-May) the Senator intends to introduce in 2005 some version of a bill to increase the diversity of representation on grand juries. No details are known at present. According to the fairly limited number of judicial officers with whom I spoke about the bill when it was active, there is little reason to believe that adding jurors from the trial jury rolls will change the demographics of grand juries so long as grand jury service is as time consuming and underpaid as it is. If, however, volunteers are eliminated, as one version of the bill apparently contemplated, significant problems in meeting the statutory number of jurors can be expected. You can monitor the bill at the Legal Developments page at <http://www.cgja.org/>.

In an apparently unrelated development the Judicial Council's Access and Fairness Advisory Committee is conducting a survey of jury commissioners/jury administrators on the demographic composition of grand juries in the superior courts. It appears that they are trying to determine whether a 1991 amendment to Penal Code section 903.4 regarding impaneling a cross-section of the county population for grand jury service has resulted in more representative grand juries. The answer might provide some insight into the likelihood that a revised SB 1673 would have the impact desired by the author.

Jack Zepp, Chair
Legal Committee

Membership Committee

For most of you, your year as a Grand Juror is almost over. If you, like most of us at the end of your first term, are amazed at how efficient some parts of local government are while others are of a very questionable nature we are not surprised. There always seems to be that one report you are proud of while there are others you wish you had a little more time to look at, but your term limit forces you to stop.

There are some people throughout the state who think the grand jury system should be dismantled while the majority of us feel the grand jury system is one of the very last methods for you and I (the ordinary tax payer) to get an in-depth look at how government works or doesn't work and let the public know what we as ordinary citizens find out.

For those of us who belong to the California Grand Jurors' Association (CGJA) we have opened our pocketbooks for (CGJA) dues at \$25 per year (July 1 through June 30) or more and many of us devote our time as well to protect a system in which we firmly believe.

The system is not perfect but sometimes politicians who have not served on a grand jury may try to pass laws to help the system, but unintentionally weaken it. Then there are others who may have a vindictive grudge and would like nothing better than to destroy or make the grand jury system useless. The CGJA is the only statewide organization that monitors proposed changes and educates those lawmakers as to the effects of their actions on the California Grand Jury system.

Please help us to continue educating the public, including politicians, and new grand jurors by renewing your membership now or joining for the first time. Remember, we have no paid employees. Membership dues are \$25 July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005.

Clif Poole, Chair

Operations Committee Report

I am sorry to report that Bob DeQuattro, our capable Journal layout man has decided to relinquish his duties that he has ably carried out for the past three (3) years. Some of you will recognize Bob as the smiling face behind the camera at the last few Annual Conferences. Bob's latest creation and I guess his last one is the excellent brochure describing our Training Seminars. It is a very professional looking job and all of us thank Bob for this and his many valuable contributions. As a member of the Operations Committee Bob was always the voice of sanity in some of our more difficult issues.

Bob, on behalf of the Committee and the Board we thank you and wish you well for your future.

Ourania Riddle will take over the design /layout task of the Journal and continue as the editor.

In our last issue, I acknowledged Dan Taranto's leaving the Publications assignment and that we now have Jeanne Forbes performing this valuable function. Linda Baker has joined forces to assist Jeanne and

between them they have documented our internal procedures for managing this function. We look to update our Publications list shortly, especially for the upcoming Training Seminars.

Earl Heal advises me that we have received several nominations for the Excellence in Reporting awards. This quick response to our announcement in the last Journal is encouraging.

Jerry Lewi, Chair

Training Committee

The 2004 CGJA Training Seminars for new grand jurors will be held at the following locations:

- July 26-27 **Visalia** – at the Visalia Convention Center.
- Aug. 2-3 **Sacramento** – at the Holiday Inn Northeast at I-80 and Madison
- Aug. 9-10 **Redding** – at the Red Lion Inn just off I-5
- Aug. 16-17 **Concord** – at the Concord Hilton, 1970 Diamond Blvd., Concord

We have added a new seminar in Redding (Shasta Co.) to make training more available to those counties in the far northern part of the state.

The registration fee remains the same, \$75 for a two-day seminar. Morning coffee and muffins or donuts are included in the fee. Each new juror who attends will receive a 200 page-training manual.

We have negotiated special rates with the hotels as follows:

- Visalia – Comfort Suites (across the street from Convention Center) \$89.
All the rooms are suites and include a complimentary breakfast
- Sacramento – Holiday Inn Northeast \$84
- Redding – Red Lion Inn \$84 single, \$94 double
- Concord – Concord Hilton \$94 single or double

Our training program is designed to complement the training and orientation provided at the local level. The Training Committee is currently finalizing the 2004 program schedules for each seminar. Each seminar has our main core program of five workshops on: 1. Grand Juries and the Law; 2. Grand Jury Investigations; 3. Grand Jury Interviewing; 4. Writing Final Reports and 5. Grand Jury Continuity.

At each seminar there will be a presentation by a county counsel on Untangling the Maze of Local Government; one on Special Districts by a speaker from the California Special Districts Association and another on How To Investigate Jails and Juvenile Detention Facilities by a speaker from the California Board of Corrections. There will also be additional guest speakers at each seminar on a variety of topics of interest to grand jurors.

In furtherance of CGJA's goal to promote comprehensive teaching for all grand jurors, we have added a new workshop designed specifically for Forepersons and Pro Teams. This new workshop was added as a pilot program to the Sacramento seminar. It will be held on Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004 from noon to 5:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Northeast.

The program will consist of:

- 1) Orientation to California law as it applies to the duties and responsibilities of forepersons;
- 2) Discussion of useful techniques to assist the foreperson in organizing and "kick-starting" the grand jury's work and...
- 3) Question-and-answer session with former forepersons to permit networking by new forepersons and exposure to the accumulated wisdom of those who have served in that role.

Since it is a pilot project, there will be no additional charge for those Forepersons and Pro Teams who are registered to attend any one our four training seminars. For those who are not, there will be a fee of \$25.

For more information about the Forepersons and Pro Tems Workshop, call or email the chairman of the team who has developed this program, Betty Mattea (Marin Co.) Ph. (415) 492-8857 or email: bjmattea@sonic.net

For information about the upcoming Training Seminars, contact me at (530) 878-8248 or email: sherryc@JPS.net

Sherry Chesny, Chair

Citizen's Complaints

In our last issue, Vice-president & Operations Chair Jerry Lewi wrote about how Grand Juries should find ways to encourage citizens who wish to submit complaints, to make those complaints more compelling. Following is an exchange of emails between member Angelo Carmassi (San Mateo) and Jerry Lewi on this subject:

Jerry,

Your comments are well taken. I strongly agree with you. To answer your inquiry, we have provided this information on our website for the past two years. (Ideal Complaint Form) We have attempted to encourage other Chapter's to visit our website without much success. The San Mateo County Association of Grand Jurors (SMCAGJ) Website Committee spent four years to develop this site. We feel our "Teacher's Guide" section is quite unique. We have raised funds to market this site and we plan to reach every teacher and secondary student in our county and eventually all teachers and students in California. Presently we have been informed that we average about 300 "hits" a month since we launched the site in 2003. Visit our website at: <http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smcagj>. When our home page opens, go to the navigation bar and select "Grand Jury Training." When this page opens, select "Inquiry Proposal Form PDF." To the best of my recollection, we visited many grand jury sites before we decided to make this our model. We felt our own county complaint form was too difficult to understand or complete. Why make it so difficult for a citizen to lodge a complaint? We should strive to educate our constituents that they have the right to complain about their government and using the grand jury is the way to go! After you review the Inquiry Form, we recommend that you go back to the navigation bar and select "Teacher's Guide." When you can't get school curriculum committees to add a unit of study about the grand jury in their history curriculum guides, this is an approach you may want to consider. Jack Zepp gave us a great deal of encouragement when we first proposed this concept. We probably would never have made this Quantum leap without his motivation. We invite you to visit our last page to make comment or suggestions on how we can improve this site

Happy Scrolling,

AngeloCarmassi
Assistant Website Coordinator
San Mateo County Association of Grand Jurors

Dear Angelo,

Thanks for your comment. Would it be OK to print your response in the next Grand Jurors' Journal?

I looked at your impressive website and the complaint form. It is similar to what we used in Ventura County. I think both could use some work such as showing a sample form that would be most likely to get the Grand Jury's attention. For example:

1. Keep the complaint to a generic form that would have a more universal appeal, rather than an individual situation.
2. Document the position with references and enclosures.
3. Suggest other resource people.

In other words, make the jury's job easy!
Jerry Lewi

Dear Jerry:

Thank you for the response. Whatever you feel is appropriate with my comments has my full approval. Our complaint sample is used by the Marin County Grand Jury. You would be interest to learn that San Mateo County Grand Jurors 2003 - 2004 complained about our example since it was entirely different from the Complaint form on their website. We did advise interested citizens to call for a copy; however, we did not recommend it since it is too confusing to the average citizen. I agree with you 100% that we, as an organized group of dedicated former grand jurors, should do our best to develop a simple form or procedure to encourage our constituents to lodge complaints whenever justified. We plan to add this to our website in the future. Why make it difficult? We should take every measure to come up with a plan to educate all of the citizens in our county how and when to lodge a complaint. This is one way to keep our government representatives on their toes.

Thank you again for your interest.
Angelo Carmassi

Juries in the News

Alameda County Grand jury faults medical center

Patrick Hoge, Chronicle Staff Writer

Inept management of the Alameda County Medical Center has left the hospital and clinic system for trauma victims and the poor in a fiscal shambles, according to a grand jury report. The Alameda County Civil Grand Jury's 2003-04 report comes as medical center officials re moving to eliminate nearly 350 positions for a \$12m in savings

The system, which includes three hospitals, an outpatient clinic, a clinic at juvenile hall and three community health care centers, has had huge deficits for years and is projecting a \$61 million deficit through June 30, 2005. The center, which was forced to close two clinics last year for lack of funds, fields 80,000 emergency room visits and hundreds of thousands of inpatient and outpatient visits annually.

Medical center spokesman Jeff Raleigh agreed with the grand jury' findings. "The system in the past had become wasteful, and that's why management consultants were brought in," Raleigh said.

Cambio Health Solutions of Brentwood, Tenn. was hired to review the center's finances. The management consulting firm recently issued a 900-page report showing that, among other failings, the medical center was not collecting a huge number of bills from Medicare and Medi-Cal. Jim Braley, a vice president with Cambio, said Wednesday that the grand jury report was correct to criticize fiscal mismanagement. He noted, however, that the grand jury recognized the center's medical care had improved in recent years. Cambio has made proposals it contends would save the medical center \$23 million a year, including a recommendation to eliminate nearly 350 positions for \$12M in savings.

The grand jury cautioned the board of trustees to study whether Cambio's recommendations would harm patient care. In addition, the report said trustees should closely monitor any proposals for increases to Cambio's \$3.2 million, 18-month contract, which the grand jury called "extremely expensive."

Other recommendations included:

- The county Office of Education should work to prevent fiscal meltdowns in school districts, such as those in Oakland, Hayward and Emeryville, with extra attention put on burgeoning special-education costs.

- The county coroner's bureau, Eden Township sheriff's substation and the sheriff's communications center should be replaced as soon as possible.
- The Board of Supervisors and county Board of Education should televise their meetings.

Grand Jury cites district attorney for misconduct

A California civil grand jury cited a district attorney for intimidating coworkers and publicly making threatening comments about two reporters at The Modesto Bee.

July 8, 2004 -- A civil grand jury in Modesto, Calif., cited a local district attorney last week for making threatening comments about a pair of newspaper reporters who were investigating his office.

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury, an investigative panel that lacks the authority to indict, also found that District Attorney James Brazelton intimidated employees in his office so they would not testify against him. In all, Brazelton was cited on nine counts of willful misconduct, including violations of the county's Workplace Security and Anti-violence Policy and its Harassment Policy.

Brazelton, was elected district attorney of Modesto in 1996 and reelected in 1998 and 2002.

The grand jury recommended that the County Board of Supervisors "publicly rebuke" Brazelton, who is required by law to respond to the allegations within 60 days. The board does not have the legal authority to punish an elected official.

The grand jury chose not file an official accusation in court, which could have led to criminal charges of "willful or corrupt conduct" by a public officer.

At the time of the alleged threats, in August 2003, reporters Michael G. Mooney and Garth Stapley of *The Modesto Bee* were investigating credit card receipts from the prosecutor's office.

According to the grand jury report, Brazelton drew his gun from its holster, held it in his open palm and told a co-worker, "This is what I would like to give that reporter." On another occasion, Brazelton uttered a similar comment in front of co-workers while making quick gestures with his right hand -- as though drawing a firearm, the report said.

Brazelton denied that either incident occurred, according to the report.

Investigators employed by the district attorney are sworn law enforcement officers who can carry firearms without a concealed weapons permit.

The report also contends that Brazelton, after being interviewed by the county counsel's office over the allegations -- the office sent the issue to the grand jury -- told staff members that he was "trying to find a rat in my office."

The grand jury additionally found that the prosecutor's office needs a stronger policy on proper use and possession of firearms by its employees, and urged the creation of policies to protect the rights of whistle-blowers.

Editorial The Augusta Chronicle (Georgia)

A SORRY AFFAIR

They came together at our behest some three years ago, these 12 strangers. "Grand jury" was the only name we knew them by. They worked in secret, giving hours and days and, ultimately, weeks and months of their time -- not for their gain, but for ours. Find out what's wrong with our government, we asked them. To say their work was thankless is to sadly understate their sacrifice. The thing is, far worse than not being thanked, these dutiful citizens were publicly pilloried by some. Some citizens, faced with unpleasant allegations about our public servants, didn't like the special grand jury's work product. That's all well and good. But some went beyond that -- calling the grand jury racist for somehow "targeting" black city officials, most prominently former Fire Chief Ronnie Few. Some of our own elected officials went so far as to travel to Washington, D.C., to support Few's hiring there -- and to condemn Augusta as a whole for being racist in questioning his performance here. Some even in recent weeks have held Ronnie Few up as some sort of martyr, crucified by a ruthless grand jury and a complicit media all it seems, irretrievably racist. If facts will ever matter to such people, however, they will see the grand jury in a

different light today. And they will offer our 12 neighbors a belated and sincere apology. You see, it appears, allegations surrounding Mr. Few aren't solely the product of little old racist Augusta, Ga. As reported by The Washington Times, an investigation by the inspector general in our nation's capital has unearthed the mismanagement of millions of dollars in contracts and questionable credit card and petty cash spending, all under Mr. Few during his brief tenure as chief there. The review randomly looked at 25 of 890 contracts worth \$4.2 million -- and, amazingly, "disclosed problems with all 25," the report said. The audit found no documentation to show that contract items ever were received or, indeed, paid for. Two contracts were awarded without bids. Petty cash accounts were flush with more cash than allowed by law, and were used for such things as T-shirts, salary advances and even parking tickets. Department credit-card purchases routinely were split to avoid daily spending limits. One employee charged \$5,000 in six months for food, including at a steak shop. Improper expenditures on meals and entertainment were approved without receipts. A \$12,892 catering bill -- again, an improper use of purchasing cards -- was split into increments of \$2,000 to get around spending limits. Few resigned as D.C. fire chief in May 2002 after two years, following allegations that his resume and those of his top appointees were exaggerated. The Times reports that during Few's tenure, "the department's fire-suppression fleet fell into disrepair, its radio system proved dangerously inadequate, response times to medical emergencies slowed and morale among employees hit a new low." These are not the racist rantings of some imaginary Deep South KKK-infiltrated grand jury. These are the considered conclusions of experts in yet a second community. Does the D.C. report prove the Richmond County grand jury's claims of slush funds, illegal promotions and more? Of course not. Those allegations are still being weighed by a prosecutor in Savannah. What the D.C. report does, however, is cast the grand jury's work in a new light. And it should prove, once and for all, that the reckless and thoughtless claims of racism against these 12 of our fellow citizens were spurious. Is it too late to be sorry?