

Sheriff Short indicted

# Indictment sparks anger — and jubilation

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**NEW PORT RICHEY** — The indictment of Pasco County Sheriff John M. Short prompted anger and tears from his backers and outright jubilation from some of his adversaries.

And, with Short saying he still intends to run for and win re-election, there was also some careful neutrality. James W. York, Short's attorney, expressed the general reaction within the Short camp.

"I think it stinks," said York, drawing attention to the timing of the indictments just 11 days before the Sept. 4 primary and Nov. 6 general elections.

Frank Snyder, the president of the West Pasco Allied Council — an organization of West Pasco neighborhood associations — said the grand jury indictments would not prevent him from voting for Short for the third time in 12 years.

Snyder also predicted that Short would prevail in the November general election. "I'll bet you the best dinner you can find in this county that (Short) is a shoo-in," he said.

Snyder characterized the grand jury as a "kangaroo court" that was nitpicking with its accusations against the sheriff. "This is minimal compared to some of the other things going on in this county," Snyder said of the indictments.

**AT THE OTHER** end of the spectrum was Dade City lawyer Charles Waller.

Waller, a target of a questionable drug investigation code-named "Clean Up Pasco," or CUP, watched on television as WTVT-Channel 13 broke into a soap opera to announce the indictment.

Waller called in his partner, Larry Hersch, and the two shook hands. All the office staff came in also. Then the phone started ringing.

For the next half-hour Waller made or received more than a dozen calls.

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my car. If he's re-elected I would expect that within a year," he said.

"When you put a small person into a position of power it takes an exceptionally honest man to do what's right, and obviously Short is a very small person," Waller added.

"He just abused his power so grossly that now he stands to lose a great deal, but I can't say I feel sorry for him. He tried to ruin my life."

"No, I'm not being objective. He used his office to purposely hurt certain individuals for political reasons — and I don't know any act more despicable."

**PASCO COUNTY COMMISSION** Chairman Jim Hollingsworth said he was surprised that Short was indicted.

"Some of the state attorney's statements in the past two days led me to believe that their case wasn't that strong," he said.

Hollingsworth said he believed Short could still win election. "I've said he's a master politician, and I still say he is. If there's anybody in city government who could come through this, he's it."

Pasco County Administrator John Gallagher, who has known Short since the two were students at Gulf High School in the early 1960s, was not as surprised.

"After what I read in the paper I can't say I'm surprised," said Gallagher. He said he did not believe Short could win a third term as sheriff. "I think the citizens were basically waiting to see what the grand jury would do. Now I don't think he can be re-elected."

County Appraiser Ted Williams, generally conceded to be the most powerful politician in Pasco County, said he had little to say about the indictments.

"It is always sad to see a public official that is indicted or stands before the bar of justice," Williams said. "This is not a joyous time."

Other officials, including County Commissioner Sandra Werner and Tax Collector Mike Olson declined to comment at all.

"I just don't think anything would be served by me discussing the matter," said Olson.

**DADE CITY REALTOR** Lewis Abraham, who was also a target of the drug investigation responsible

for many of Short's difficulties, said he feels vindicated now that Short has been arrested. "I shouldn't have been put in the position to begin with," Abraham said.

Businessman Otto Weitzenkorn, originally on the CUP list but almost immediately "cleared" in a statement that left Waller and Abraham still under that cloud, said he was not necessarily celebrating Short's difficulties.

"I don't know," Weitzenkorn said. "The sheriff hurt me deeply by what he did and I guess I should feel real happy, but I have mixed emotions. I hope we will have a new sheriff, a good, honest, dedicated sheriff, but beyond that, I'd like to withhold comment until I know a little more about the facts."

While Short's West Pasco office was in pretty much a state of siege Friday afternoon as reporters staked out its lobby and entrances waiting for Short's appearance, things were quiet at the department's East Pasco office in Dade City. Employees there listened to the news on the radio, but continued working.

"The ship goes on," said one deputy as he walked down a hallway.