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Gun Czar's Scattered Arms Dumps

By Charles Howe

At least five new private munitions dumps have been traced to mysterious William Thoresen III—the arms czar of Pacific Heights—Federal authorities said yesterday.

Assistant U. S. Attorney Jerrold Ladar said two search warrants were obtained in connection with two East Bay locations and additional warrants would be obtained today.

Contrary to some reports, however, Ladar said no seizures were conducted yesterday and they probably wouldn't get under way until sometime today.

One of the largest of these stockpiles is located in an Oakland trucking yard, as The Chronicle reported yesterday.

Three others are elsewhere in the East Bay and one — "a rather picayune matter," a Federal agent said — is somewhere in San Francisco.

But just what they may contain — and speculation ranged from thousands of bullets to, perhaps, a baby tank — officials weren't revealing if they knew.

Thoresen, who has a sub-

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stantial police record for similar violations of Federal and State firearms laws ("the right to bear arms doesn't include machine guns," an agent said) still remains as elusive as a latter-day Pimpernel.

As Federal agents were lining up a loan of Presidio Army trucks and munitions specialists to cart away what promises to be the largest private arms hoard in United States history — a minimum of 20 tons — a massive search was under way for the gun czar himself.

There was speculation that Thoresen, a 30-year-old heir to a multi-million-dollar steel fortune, was out of the country.

His handsome wife, Louise, also 30 and also named in various Federal firearms complaints dealing with the unlawful possession of automatic weapons, continued to remain silent. She and her 5-year-old son remained in seclusion in their opulent but almost bare mansion at 2801 Broadway, the site of the first hoard of arms.

Just why Thoresen developed what some have called a mania for guns (one spokesman said he'd been negotiating with New York State to buy six obsolete machine guns at the Ossining Penitentiary there) continued to remain a mystery.

The voluble J. W. Ehrlich, the Thoresen's attorney, continued to maintain the husband may have had an uncontrollable firearms fetish while his wife was a kind of unwitting pawn in his machinations; a loving woman who did what she was told to do Federal agents said she tried to buy a Thompson submachine gun in New York earlier last week.

Mrs. Thoresen remained

free on bail now totaling more than \$20,000 on various charges of violating State and Federal firearms laws.

Thoresen was remembered well yesterday by Johnny Richards, owner of Potomac Arms in Alexandria, Va., who said he had two dealings with him in February and March.

"We sold him somewhat in excess of \$800 worth of equipment," Richards recalled over the telephone, "mainly blank .303 ammunition and about 2500 rounds of live .303 ammunition."

Richards said Thoresen — "who seemed like a regular sportsman and a well-bred man" — hadn't seemed at all interested in Potomac's line of modern and lawful firearms.

"I had the impression he was a collector," said Richards, "and I had no hesitation about accepting his checks."