

—Great impostor—

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Some people think he still has the touch.

"Far as I'm concerned, he's a fraud," Gremillion said, flatly denying Abagnale's tale. The ex-attorney general (1966 to 1973) described the story as "absolutely untrue and preposterous."

Abagnale's \$10 autobiography ("Catch Me If You Can") was listed No. 4 on nonfiction best seller list in the Oct. 6, 1980, Time Magazine. The book says he was born in 1948. That would put him in Baton Rouge about 1967.

DeJean, who has been with the AG's office since 1963, was more than skeptical.

"The man is not an impostor, he is a liar," the assistant attorney general said.

"I've seen him on TV a couple of times," DeJean said. "The man's face doesn't mean anything to me."

DeJean skimmed the chapter of Abagnale's book that tells of his escapade as a phony lawyer and assistant attorney general.

"There are quite a few discrepancies," DeJean said.

The book says Abagnale took an eight-hour bar exam three times in 13 weeks before passing it.

DeJean and J. Reginald Coco, now chairman of the state tax commission, find that curious. They took the test in the 1960s and said it required three days and was only offered twice a year.

Coco said he was with Gremillion's office between 1960 and 1969 and worked with the bookkeeper in connection with payroll and personnel records after 1963.

"I think I would have remembered Robert Conrad," said Coco, adding that he would have associated the name with that

of a television actor.

"The name Bob Conrad doesn't strum a bell," he said. "The face doesn't either."

Tom McFerrin, now with the Division of Administration, said he worked in the AG's office from 1961 to 1970 and knew all the assistant attorneys general.

"I knew every one of 'em," he said. "That (name) doesn't ring a bell at all." Shown photos of Abagnale, McFerrin said, "No, I've never seen the man."

Abagnale said he has told his story on television numerous times to Johnny Carson and other personalities.

The San Francisco Chronicle, on page one of its Oct. 6, 1978, edition, said Abagnale conned Carson. The story included contradictions of claims by Abagnale, including the story of his adventures in Louisiana.

"In telephone checks across the country by The Chronicle, hardly anyone confirmed the tales that Abagnale told" the newspaper said. The stories were told to a reporter and later to some 100 other persons — including representatives of the San Francisco police, district attorney's office, the FBI, local banks and stores — at a seminar on white-collar crime, The Chronicle said.

The Associated Press recounted Abagnale's alleged adventures in a story filed from Middletown, N.J., this past November. The Newark bureau of the AP said the story was picked up from an account in the Asbury Park Press.

The State-Times ran the wire service story, but edited out references to Baton Rouge and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office because of difficulty in getting confirmation.