

Remote sensing projects study ponds, rangelands

Two research projects utilizing remote sensing techniques have begun at A&M. One study is in pond ecology and the other is an analysis of Texas rangelands.

Both projects are assisted by the Remote Sensing Center. Dr. W. J. Clark of the Biology Department is measuring pond

ecology parameters. He will monitor the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of a series of ponds using aerial photography and a combination of film and filters. Dr. Robert H. Haas, assistant professor of range science, directs the rangeland study.

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RAIN ALL DAY Tuesday didn't stop construction on the campus, even if it did get muddy in the multitude of holes. Welders continued on the pipe system being put in on the north side of the Academic Building, and the trench they were working in, about 10 feet deep, was no exception. (Photo by Hayden Whitsett)

Rising fear of pesticides is panic: food technologist

A nationally known food technologist said here Tuesday that the fast-rising fear of pesticides—DDT in particular—is largely the result of panic button pushing.

He laid much of the blame on conservationists, the news media

and opportunistic politicians.

He also criticized the government and the pesticides industry for failure to avoid the crisis.

The opinions came from Dr. Emil M. Mrak, chancellor emeritus of the University of California at Davis, during the opening

session of the third annual Conference on Insect, Plant Disease, Weed and Brush Control.

Last year, Mrak was chairman of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Commission on Pesticides and Their Relationship to Environmental Health.

His Tuesday address was the second of two given on the A&M campus.

The big campaign against pesticides began as a "spin-off" from the activities and concerns of conservationists and environmentalists, the food technologist told the estimated 250 persons attending the conference.

"In any event, prejudices did develop, conservationists became more active, and as the snowball grew, industry unfortunately did nothing to contest the trends or to improve their situation with respect to the environment," he pointed out.

Then came the newspapers and magazine, which Mrak said had a "field day" covering the pesticides issue.

"As one publisher said to me, he desired to give the people what they wanted to read, and furthermore, he had to sell newspapers. Accordingly, he published what he thought they wanted and to sell newspapers. This, of course, meant printing slanted and dramatic stories that did no one any good except the communications media," he said.

Politicians moved into the picture, Mrak said, because they realized the public interest and publicity value—especially in an election year. Hearings were held, bills were introduced, "and away we went."

"I'm aware of one legislator who even indicated that he just had to have a bill on DDT regardless of what it meant, said or did. His objective, of course, was to obtain publicity, and this he did," Mrak said.

The speaker described the agricultural and pesticides industry as scattered and confused. Constructive programs are lacking.

"We actually see industry pushing the panic button in some cases—even to the extent of ceasing to manufacture certain chemicals and discontinuing research in this area," he explained.

Failure level found high for seatbelts

Seat belts with a proven high failure record are still found in many private aircraft and commercial airlines, an aerospace engineering major has found.

Vincent C. Anderson of Madrid, Spain, reported in a study for an aerospace engineering course that no belt is perfect, but metal-to-metal buckle types have superior safety features.

"A metal-to-metal buckle similar to that used in military aircraft should be used in private aircraft," recommended the student who recently received his bachelor of science degree and commission as an Air Force reserve officer.

Anderson pointed out that friction belts that fasten metal to fabric were prohibited in sports car racing several years ago. New car installations now rarely use the friction belt.

Problems with the metal-to-fabric belt include slipping under alternating load and release, frequent jamming and weakening of belt fibers "from constant crushing and abrasion of serrated metal. With the metal-to-metal buckle, there is no such effect," he said.

Anderson cited Federal Aviation Administration research and recorded difficulties with the

metal-to-web buckle. In a 1968 single-engine airplane ditching off the Bahamas, the impact pulled the belt so tight the pilot had trouble releasing the buckle.

The Amarillo Palo Duro High School graduate said in his report to Dr. Charles A. Rodenberger that metal-to-metal buckles can jam, particularly after subjected to high loads. Corrosion may also be a tendency of the better buckle, but he said anodized aluminum and quality control manufactured steel buckles reduce the problem.

Anderson noted price differences in the two belt types is no more than \$2, in models ranging from under \$3 to over \$13 per belt. He said the added cost for metal-to-metal buckle types in a 350-passenger airplane would be about \$700.

Though more complex belt arrangements tend not to be used, Anderson suggested shoulder harness fastened by latch to the lap belt buckle should be considered for all private aircraft.

"Research has shown shoulder harness can reduce serious injuries by 70 per cent," the former Squadron 3 Cadet Corps member said. "If they were engineered to be snapped in for take-off and landing, and released for cruising flight, shoulder straps might be used more frequently."

The recent graduate said the best answer would be inertia reel type shoulder harness. It allows pilots and passengers free movement, but a sudden snap of two

G's (gravity force) locks the reel.

As a minimum, Anderson says the metal-to-metal fastening belt is the only safe lock available.

It offers maximum safety, ease of use and is the type buckle passengers know from use of similar buckles in their cars.

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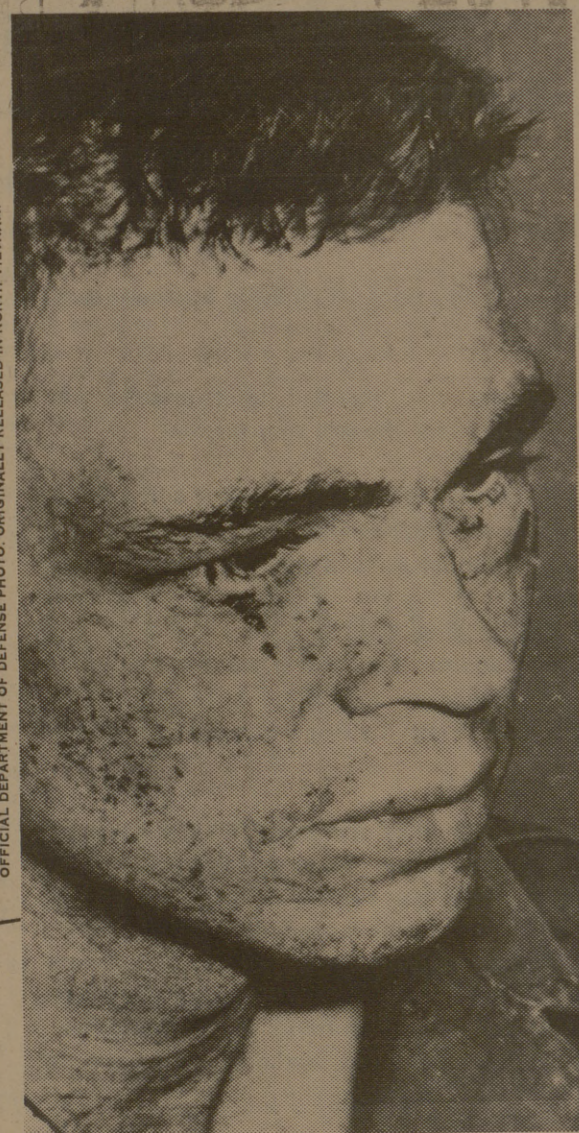
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