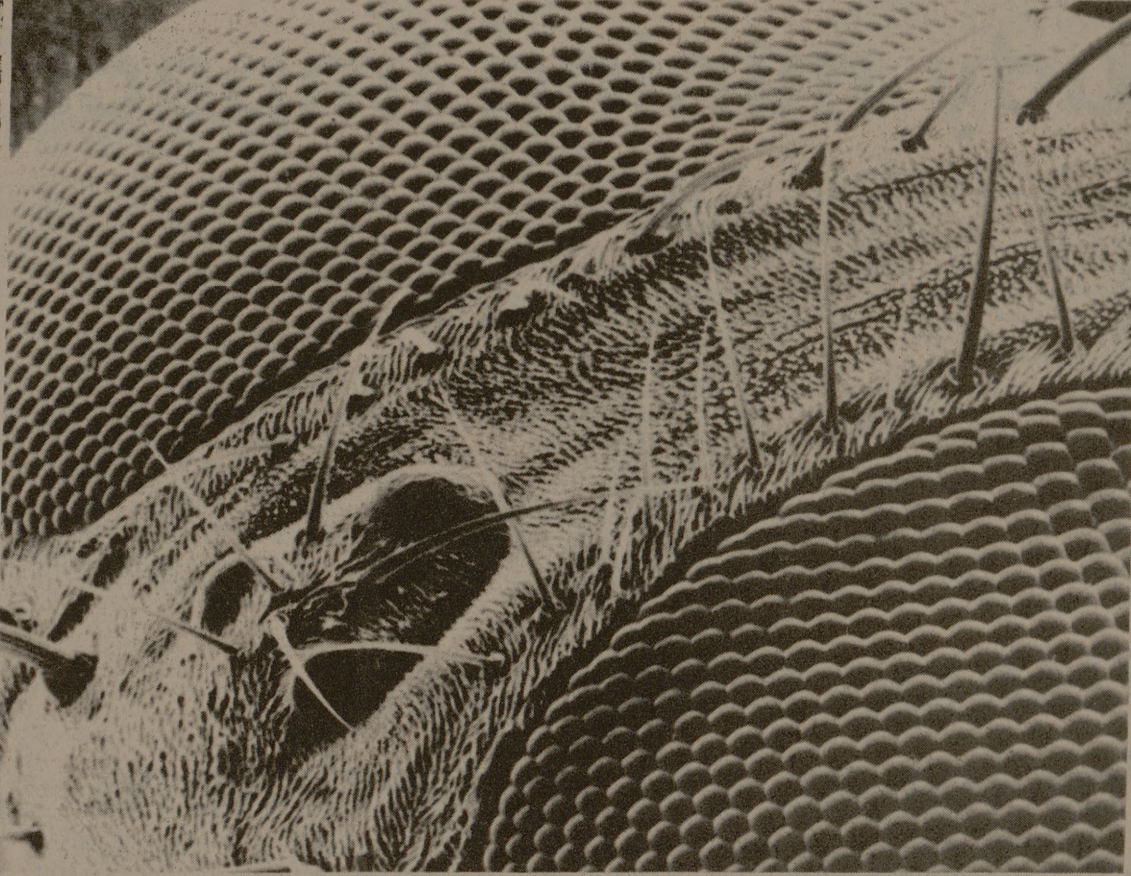


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In a fly's eye

The above picture shows the head of the common housefly in extreme magnification. The two quilted areas are compound eyes that detect range and movement. The small mounds at the bottom left of the picture are simple eyes that detect light. The picture was taken through an electron microscope by Dr. Nick Norton of TAMU.

TAMU to study failure of offshore pipelines

Offshore pipelines have a determined foe — the sea.

The tremendous forces produced by the ocean cause up to a 25 per cent failure rate in these pipes that carry everything from oil and gas to waste material.

A TAMU research team headed by Dr. W. R. Bryant, an oceanographer, and Drs. Wayne Dunlap and Harry Coyle, civil engineers, is exploring some of the pipeline problems in the Mississippi Delta.

"Many companies assure government agencies that the pipelines they lay on the Continental Shelf are going to settle in and bury themselves," Bryant said. "Actually, there is no rational way to predict the behavior of a pipeline when it's placed on fine-grained cohesive sediments; mud."

"The designers and regulatory agencies are often faced with decisions regarding pipeline burial which is based on incomplete and in some cases incorrect information," Dunlap said. "Often the companies that say their pipelines will bury themselves don't know whether they will or not."

"The thrust of this study is to determine what the bearing capacity and settlement characteristics of the mud is," he said. "This way the USGS can review the plans of an oil or pipeline company and know whether to agree to their pipeline plans or ask them to prepare alternate solutions."

"This work will include a field and laboratory study plus a survey of the state of the art," Dunlap said.

"This is going to entail a lot of ship and submarine time," he said. "The first cruise in the program will be September 15. We will lay sections of our own pipe and observe it with television and the TAMU submarine 'Diaphus' in several localities off Louisiana and Mississippi."

From the survey, lab testing, field verifications and geo-technical analysis researchers hope to develop a design method that would allow them to predict whether the pipeline will remain on the surface of the bottom or undergo self-burial. If burial is required, a method to determine the weight that has to be added to the pipeline to produce self-burial must also be developed.

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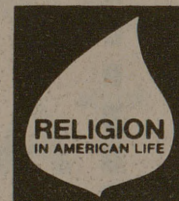
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