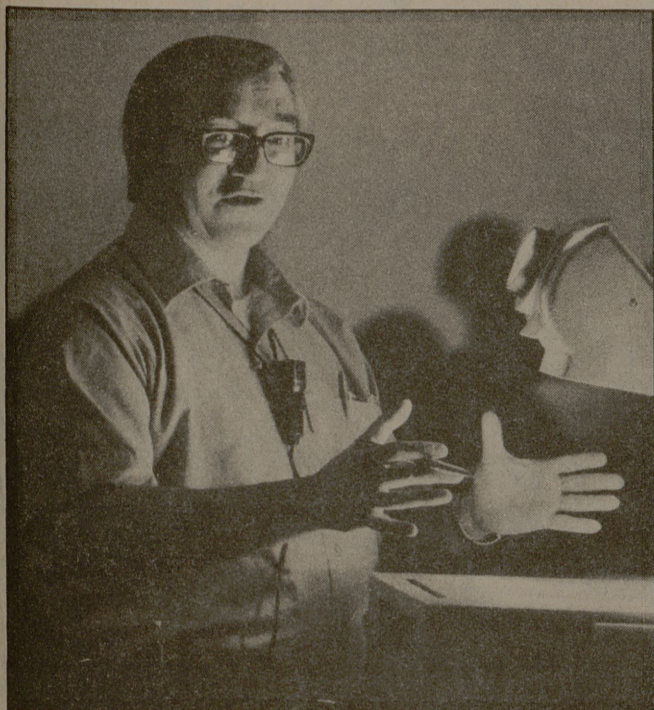


# O'Connor: mad scientist



Dr. Rod O'Connor

Steve Kraus

By LISA JUNOD

The harsh lights dim and a long-haired, stoop-shouldered man be-frocked in a stained white lab coat bustles down the aisle of the chemistry lecture room, scattering papers and side-stepping students as he goes.

When he reaches the lecture podium he shakily adjusts his sunglasses, clears his throat and begins mumbling in a heavy German accent. He tells the expectant freshman chemistry students that his name is Dr. Irgolic and launches into a complex definition of an sp-3 hybrid orbital. Grabbing a beaker and flask off the table, the professor announces that he will demonstrate a change of state experiment.

Seconds after he begins pouring from the flask the lights go out, the front of the room fills with smoke and out of the mess emerges a smiling, energetic man who strides up to the

blackboard and writes, "My name is Dr. O'Connor!"

Dr. Rod O'Connor, director of the University's Freshman Chemistry Program, is known among his colleagues and students for his own peculiar brand of humor. In addition to the mad scientist routine, O'Connor has started the first day of class dressed as a janitor sweeping the front floor of the lecture hall. Each time the "janitor" drops something into a trash can the can explodes and when he drops his cigar the floor seems to ignite.

O'Connor says that on the first day of classes students have a tendency to be slightly nervous and worried. He likes to make them laugh to relax them and convince them that their fears are groundless.

"Chemistry has a reputation of being a hard subject to take. This just isn't true. Students willing to work have nothing to worry about — we

give an average of 50 per cent A's and B's here in Freshman Chemistry," said O'Connor.

Each year more than 4,000 different students enroll in Freshman Chemistry at Texas A&M. O'Connor said that the challenge of developing a program for so many students was one of the main factors that prompted him to come to A&M in 1973.

"That, and money," he admitted, grinning.

O'Connor was born in Lilbourn, Mo., the son of a school superintendent. He said that one of his earliest childhood memories was of the time when, in 1939, his father attempted to integrate the public schools in his district.

"I remember staying up one night watching my father and grandfather sitting out on the porch with their shotguns across their knees, waiting for the Ku Klux Klan to appear," O'Connor said.

"I was very disappointed when they never showed up. This was before we had TV and I was looking for a little violence," he explained.

O'Connor's formal education includes a stint at the University of California at Berkeley where he practiced "being radical." Earlier, he had enrolled at Southeastern Missouri State College with aspirations of becoming an engineer. However, he switched his major to chemistry to avoid transferring to another school.

"I had my eyes on a little brunette at Southeastern. She made chemistry look a lot more appealing. I've been married to her for twenty years now . . . she sure paid off!"

Although he jokes about his personal life, O'Connor is very serious about helping students with problems in chemistry. He believes that one of his program's strongest points

See O'Connor, page 4

# The Battalion

Vol 68, No 70

College Station, Texas

Thursday, Feb. 5, 1976

## Williams addresses SG

# Housing limited '75 admissions

Approximately 3,000 prospective students were turned down for the lack of adequate housing for the fall 1975 semester, University President Jack K. Williams told the student senate last night.

During a 45-minute segment of the 4 1/2 hour session, Williams also talked about recent marijuana arrests of three former A&M athletes and answered senators' questions, including one which prompted the statement about enrollment.

Williams said the enrollment for next fall will be 27,500 if the same number of new

students enroll as last year. Williams told the Senate enrollment should peak near 30,000 students.

The arrests of three former athletes had not affected A&M in any adverse way that he knew of, Williams said. He added that as far as he knew there were no undercover narcotic agents working on campus.

The Senate, in other business, approved 28 changes in the University Rules and Regulations. These included changes in academic and student life regulations.

During the three-hour discussion on changing the policies, senator Brad Wakeman moved that "fish" be allowed in the

dorms. This brought cheers and clapping from numerous Corps and civilian students. The Senate finally approved "aquatic animals as the only pets allowed in dormitory rooms."

Also at last night's meeting the Senate read the proposals of the Student Service Fee Allocation Committee. The committee recommends the amount of Student Service fees that are given to the various student organizations.

The committee is recommended to the Senate that the Athletic Department should receive \$30,000 less than last year's \$120,000. This allocation also included a plan to sell student season ticket books for

football for \$15.00. If 20,000 students expected to buy ticket books the Athletic Dept. should derive a revenue of \$300,000 plus \$90,000 from Student Service fees.

Senator Robert Harvey introduced a bill recommending to the College Station City Council that the permissible drinking hours be extended to 2:15 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. Presently, the hours for consumption of alcoholic beverages ends at 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

The allocation recommendations and liquor hours proposals will be voted on at the Tuesday, Feb. 10, meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m.

## Site for civic center may be donated

By STEVE GRAY

Contributing Editor

College Station may be nearing the end of its search for a site for its proposed civic convention center.

City Councilman Bob Bell, chairman of the city's hotel-motel tax committee, said the city is discussing the possibility of accepting the donation of a 12-acre tract from Area Progress Corp., a local land development company. The land, part of the 136-acre Southland Valley subdivision now being developed by Area Progress, is south

of FM 2818, directly across from A&M Consolidated High School.

In September, the city council appointed a civic center committee, headed by Al Pedulla, that was charged with studying possible sites for the center. Pedulla said last night he was unaware that the city had been discussing the proposed donation and was unable to comment on the matter. Pedulla is acting director of architecture research at Texas A&M University.

Pedulla did say, however, that one of his

students in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design is doing a design study for the proposed center. The study will determine an optimum site as well as the kinds of facilities that might be included in the center, Pedulla said.

The city has already allocated \$25,000 from its hotel-motel tax fund for construction of the center which is expected to cost several hundred thousand dollars. The fund, which is used strictly for tourist promotion, currently totals \$45,365. How-

ever, the city will probably have to draw money from other sources later to pay the remainder of the costs.

The fund represents a 3 per cent tax levied quarterly on the earnings of each of the city's nine hotels or motels, including the university's Memorial Student Center Hotel. The state also levies an additional 3 per cent tax for statewide tourist promotion.

W.D. (Bill) Fitch, president of Area Pro-

(See "Civic", page 5)

## Two USAC races planned

# Speedway sold to racing firm

By JIM PETERS

Battalion City Editor

For more than two years, Texas World Speedway has been sold to a Philadelphia-based racing syndicate.

"It's a matter of the official papers being signed," Richard C. Conole, president of The World Series of Auto Racing, told The Battalion yesterday.

No final purchase price was announced regarding the sale of the \$6.25 million trackway from its current owner, the Holloway Sand and Gravel Co. of Michigan, to Texas Speedway Limited Partnership.

The two men involved in the partnership are W. Perry Gresh of Bryn Mawr, Pa. and H.B. Lehr of Rydal, Pa.

The partnership will lease the 2-mile track, located 8 miles south of College Sta-

tion on State Highway 6, to Texas World Speedway Inc. (TWSI), said Conole, TWSI president.

Conole said two United States Auto Club (USAC) sponsored racing double-headers are tentatively planned for this year. He emphasized, however, that they "haven't been firmed up yet."

The first event, April 4, would pair a 150-mile stock-car race with a 150-mile championship (Indianapolis-type) auto race, said Jack Martin, director of public affairs for USAC.

The same kind of doubleheader is tentatively set for Oct. 17, Martin said, except the distance of those races will be 200 miles.

Conole said there have been no problems in getting USAC-sanctioning for the planned racing slates. "The racing fraternity

has been very interested in our plans," he said. "They want to see this track open again."

Besides the steep-banked main track, the facility includes a 2.75-mile road course. Conole said this track will be leased to racing groups for motorcycle and other road races.

The grandstand seats 26,000 and the track's infield can accommodate an additional 30,000 spectators.

The speedway has had two owners since it opened under the name Texas International Speedway in November 1969. Dan Holloway Sr., whose sand and gravel company was the major contractor for the track, bought the speedway in 1971 after the original owners went bankrupt. He renamed it Texas World Speedway.

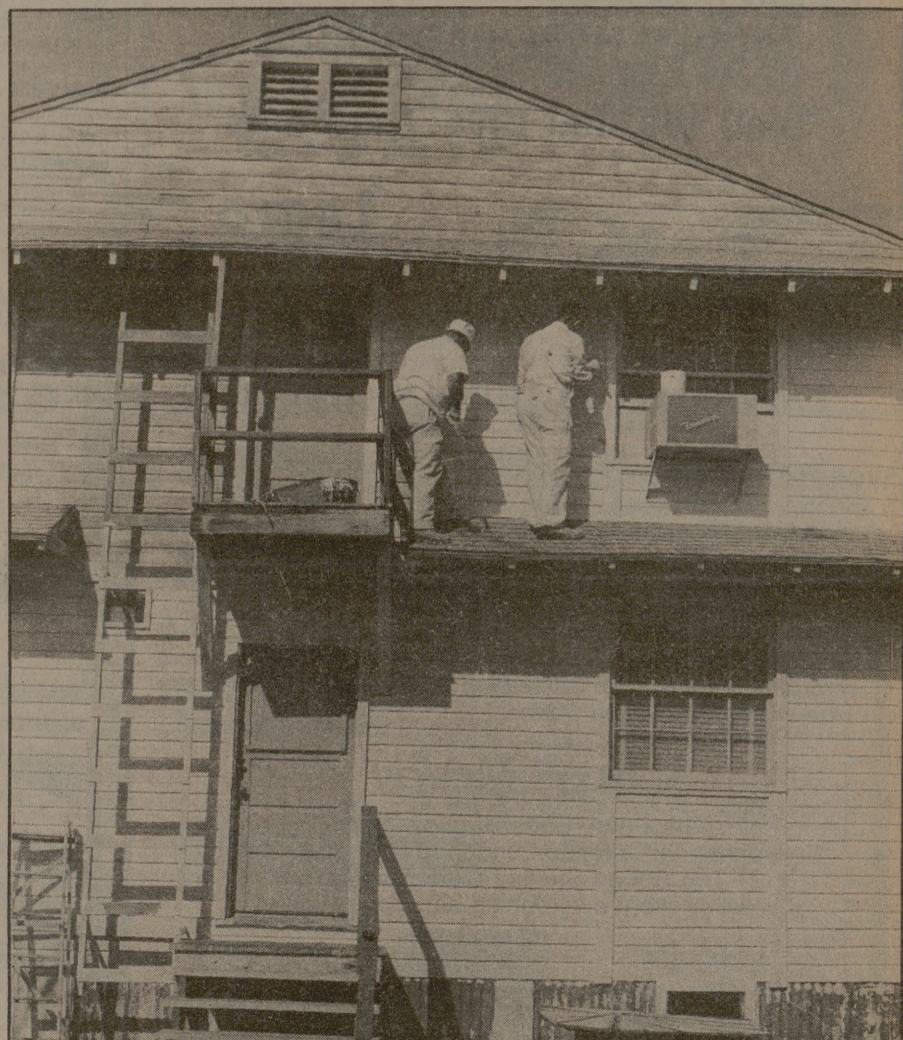
Problems continued to plague the speedway which was once called the "world's fastest track" when closed-track speed records were set there in 1972.

Rain postponed several races and in October 1973 the management closed the track, citing the energy crisis as the major factor.

The last event held at the speedway was Willie Nelson's 1975 Fourth of July country music festival.

Major improvements are eventually planned for the 640-acre facility, Conole said, after the track becomes well-established.

"But the main thing is to get racing back in Texas. The people here like it, and they've been denied it for quite awhile."



Amanda Page

Barracks converted to a "temporary" office building in 1948 receive a new coat of paint. A&M is using the barracks to fight office space shortages on-campus.

## Office space scarce, barracks being used

By LEE ROY LESCHPER JR.

Battalion Staff Writer

Office space at A&M is in short supply and may remain so until Fall, 1977, Dr. Charles E. McCandless, director of facilities and planning, said Tuesday.

A&M hired the equivalent of about 110 additional full-time faculty and staff personnel for the 1975-76 school year, McCandless said.

No additional office space will be available until spring, 1977 and most projected office additions are projected for Fall, 1977, he said.

"We hope there will be enough flexibility within the colleges to accommodate new faculty members," McCandless said.

For '77 there should be enough new offices to get back to reasonably satisfactory office conditions, he said.

The Architecture Building and the Animal Resources Laboratory and Research Facility will be finished by spring, '77, said Mel Lasell, assistant director of planning and institutional analysis. Those two buildings will total 134,710 square feet of floor space, including 12,150 sq. ft. of office space.

Most of the space in those buildings will be used for teaching and special use facilities, he said.

Three new buildings are slated for completion by fall, 1977. These, the Soil & Crop Sciences and Entomology Center, the Animal Industries and Poultry Science Center and Classroom-Lab Building, will yield 296,000 sq. ft. and 44,000 sq. ft. of new office space.

Conversion of Milner Hall to office space is also slated for fall '77 completion. After conversion Milner will provide 21,000 sq. ft. of space, including 13,800 sq. ft. of office space.

Total office space on campus at present is 702,000 sq. ft. The majority of that space is

in faculty, clerical and staff offices. New office space by fall, '77 will be about 70,700 sq. ft.

Several A&M colleges will receive space in the new buildings. The College of Agriculture will take over the soil and Crop

See Office, page 5

## INDEX

A SUBCOMMITTEE of the Residence Hall Judicial Authority proposed last night the use of electric percolators and popcorn poppers in the dormitories. Page 3.

AN EARTHQUAKE IN GUATEMALA killed an estimated 2,000. Page 4.

SCHNABEL MAY NOT TESTIFY before a Travis County grand jury because he said he feels it is prejudiced against him. Page 5.

THE BANK ROBBERY Patty Hearst is on trial for is to be reconstructed. Page 6.

THE FORECAST for Thursday is cloudy and cooler with 30 per cent chance of showers; 20 per cent tonight. Northeasterly winds expected at 5-15 mph. Tonight's temperature will be in the low 40's.



Steve Goble

Two auto races are scheduled this year for Texas World Speedway. The long-vacant track was sold earlier this week.