

Texan works as aquanaut in North Sea

Associated Press
SUMBURGH, Shetland Islands — He speaks with a Texas drawl and wears cowboy boots with pointed toes.

His name is Lee Wayne Johnson. He comes from Corpus Christi, and his occupation is deep sea diving in the treacherous North Sea.

"Heck, it's a pretty healthy way of life," said the 39-year-old "aquanaut," as divers are known in these parts.

"We eat a very high protein diet and breathe a lot of pure oxygen. It's not a bad life," said Johnson who heads a team of 21 U.S. and British divers working in the Thistle Oil Field 130 miles northeast of the Shetland Islands, the most northerly of the 14 commercial fields in the British sector of the North Sea.

The job at the moment is to dive as deep as 530 feet in the frigid waters of the United Kingdom's continental shelf. Thistle lies in the deepest water yet exploited and its 968-foot oil platform, now being completed, will be nearly as tall as the Eiffel Tower.

Burmah Oil of Britain, acting on behalf of U.S. and West German interests, plans to drill up to 60 wells from the platform to tap what it hopes are billions of barrels of oil lying two to three miles beneath the sea.

The North Sea oil boom has attracted many Americans like Johnson, a 15-year veteran of oil industry diving in the United States and Persian Gulf.

"The North Sea is more treacherous and so much rougher and colder than anywhere else I've worked," said Johnson. "Anyone who falls overboard into this water would expire in five minutes."

Even in mid-August the water temperature is 45 degrees and in winter it drops to 38.

"It's quite a challenge for any diver," Johnson said.

Sixty divers and other oil rig workers died between 1965 and 1975 in the North Sea.

"Most of these men were inexperienced and probably panicked when something went wrong. Virtually every accident that has been investigated out here can be put down to human error," said Johnson.

Today's divers are better trained and equipped and must meet the strict qualifications of the British government's diving regulations introduced last year, covering a diver's training, age, number of dives, medical checkups and equipment.

Consequently the number of diving accidents has dropped significantly, but most divers agree that North Sea diving will never be completely safe. There are too many unknowns.

As oil companies reach into deeper offshore waters for new oil strikes, divers are being called upon to plunge to 1,000 feet or below and simulated dives have reached 1,500 feet.

Special capsules and minisubmarines are on the drawing boards to enable oil explorers to push out into uncharted waters 2,000 feet deep, handling the jobs now done by divers. But until such techniques are perfected, the industry must rely on divers for essential drilling and pipelaying tasks.

Aggie Players to hold auditions

Auditions will be held tonight for the Aggie Players' production of "Man of La Mancha."

Readings will begin at 7 p.m. in the forum of the Rudder Tower. Aggie Players' Director Robert W. Wenck said that actors, singers, dancers, musicians and technicians will be needed for the mammoth production of Dale Wasserman's musical success.

He stressed that persons interested in auditioning need not be members of the student company.

"Man of La Mancha" performances are booked for Oct. 16, 22 and 23 in the Rudder Auditorium.

Senatorial tribute to retiring Hart

Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Senate liberals and conservatives joined in a tribute to retiring Sen. Philip Hart, passing a resolution naming a new office building for him.

Hart, suffering from cancer, is completing his third term. The Michigan Democrat has been a leader of Senate liberals, but before the resolution was passed on Monday, two of the most conservative members of the Senate paid tribute to him.

Sen. James Allen, D-Ala., called him a "gentle, lovable and loving man" who is "dedicated, determined and strong."

Republican Sen. Roman Hruska of Nebraska said Hart is a fair man, always respected by his colleagues for his personality and ability.

Religious freedom

The first legislative act proclaiming religious freedom was enacted in 1649 in St. Mary's City, Maryland's first settlement.

Compromise leaves B1 fate to new president

By HARRISON HUMPHRIES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The congressional compromise on the B1 bomber leaves the plane's ultimate fate in the hands of the man occupying the White House next Feb. 1.

Supporters of the plane yesterday hailed the decision by Senate and House conferees to allow work to proceed on the bomber.

Opponents also were happy, and they pointed to the spending limit of \$87 million a month until Feb. 1,

after the next president is inaugurated.

Rep. Robert L. F. Sikes, D-Fla., a member of the conference committee seeking a compromise between Senate and House versions, called the decision "a modified go ahead."

The \$87 million monthly limit is one-twelfth of the \$1.049 billion requested by the Pentagon for initial costs of a planned fleet of 244 bombers estimated to cost \$22 billion. Opponents of the plane say the

spending limit makes it easier for the project to be stopped if the next president so decides.

Both the House and Senate previously approved the production funding as part of a \$150 billion military appropriation for the 12 months beginning Oct. 1.

But the Senate added a restriction prohibiting spending of any of the production money until next Feb. 1 to give the newly inaugurated president a chance to review completed

prototype test data and decide whether to proceed.

The Ford administration reportedly was prepared to sign a B1 production contract in November, committing some \$850 million for production of the first three operational aircraft.

Jimmy Carter, the Democratic presidential nominee, has indicated his doubts about proceeding with B1 production, and the Democratic

party platform urges delay in funding.

In another development in the B1 program, the Air Force reported Tuesday that part of a B1 bomber body section cracked while being subjected to greater than normal stresses in a test pressure chamber.

A spokesman for Rockwell International's B1 division said the crack would not have occurred during normal flight. The part was not in one of the three prototype bombers being test flown, the Air Force said.

Cell disease kills

Prairie View frosh

Associated Press
HOUSTON — Sick cell crisis has been diagnosed as the cause of death of Mark Brown, 19, a Prairie View A&M University freshman football player who died Aug. 19.

Brown, son of Mr. and Mrs. Burnett Brown of Houston, became ill during football practice and died in Waller County Hospital.

A spokesman at the Harris County morgue, where an autopsy was performed, said Tuesday a combination of circumstances transpired to cause a breakdown in the red blood cells.

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