

# Computer to predict weather in future

People have been trying to guess the weather even before Joseph's seven fat years and seven lean years for Egypt over 4,000 years ago, responded one veteran meteorologist in a poll of Texas A&M University scientists regarding the future of weather prediction.

Their observations come at a time when, around the world sides have been taken between advocates of a "big freeze" and those who support a "big heat-up theory." Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is preparing a computerized long-range weather forecasting system which Secretary of Agriculture Bob

Bergland says would give them "gamblers' odds" in forecasting.

Under the plan, U.S. and foreign weather records, some dating back more than 100 years, will be placed in a computer system. The computer, Bergland says, may give six to five odds, for example, on the probability of future drought or the kind of winter that has gripped the eastern half of the U.S.

Prof. John Griffiths, who is a professor at Texas A&M and the official Texas state climatologist, reminds that modeling climate by computers gives answers not as good as the data put in.

"This is where we're lacking," Griffiths pointed out. "We may not be measuring elements of the atmosphere that are very important." For instance, the output of the sun isn't measured accurately. Perhaps there is something there or in the sea that affects the climate," he said. "We just don't know."

"We've obtained greater knowledge of areas of influence in the past 10 years, but I can't see the day when we'll be able to say there will be a rainstorm over the southern part of town tomorrow at noon any more than we can say what the climate in southern Texas will be in 20 years," Griffiths added.

"The main clue I see for what is needed now is to plan better for what we know is going to occur," he emphasized. "There are enough numbers (information) available to plan with reasonable efficiency for stores and reserves of energy supplies. Early planning between users and climatologists is essential and foolish to overlook at this stage."

Dr. A. H. Thompson notes that even current predictions are ignored.

"This winter was forecast fairly well, but even if the prediction had been wrong this year it would have come true in the next several," he said.

Prof. W. K. Henry said "... even if we could make the forecasts I don't think it would make much difference to many farmers; they still have to try to make a crop."

"We can forecast 24 hours ahead with reasonable accuracy and five days with some accuracy," Henry pointed out. "However, when you go to six months or more, it's not the same kind of forecast. The best one can do is to say an area will have higher rainfall or lower temperatures. At five years maybe you can use the climatic averages, but not a forecast. The skill of prediction decreases with time."

Dr. K. C. Brundidge, head of Texas A&M's Department of

Meteorology, said, "Nothing is going to happen other than the directing of more information to the average person."

"More money would be welcome for research, and computers are helping to get consistently good forecasts for up to 36 hours in advance," Brundidge pointed out. "However, you can't forecast what you can't see."

"That's why satellites have been a big boom, particularly for information out of the polar and ocean regions," he added. "Our problem is that upper-air observing stations are averaging 200 miles apart. A lot can happen inbetween these stations that never gets put into the computer. Unfortunately this stuff — showers, winds, etc. — is weather."

## Pre-law members work with student legal advisor

Texas A&M University students will be aiding fellow students with their legal matters.

Four members of the A&M Pre-law Society are assisting Chris Kling, student legal advisor.

"I'll incorporate them into my office routine," Kling said. He explained that the students will sit in interviews, take case notes and carry out research in the library and county clerk's office.

The first project will involve the stage's parking lot situation," Kling said.

Several students have recently had their cars towed away from an

area on the east end of University Square shopping center.

The students say the area is a public street and not included in the parking lot owned by Culpepper Properties.

"I am going to send a student to the county clerk's office and have him dig through the deed records," Kling said. "He'll find out what exactly is public property and what is private property."

The students, screened by the Pre-Law Society, are required to have upper level classification, intend to apply for law school and be willing to devote six to eight hours a week to the job.

Sonny Luedtke, president of the society, worked for Ken Robinson, former legal advisor, as an assistant during the past summer session.

"This will be good experience for those going to law school," Kling said. "They will be able to familiarize themselves with a little bit of the law."

Students working this semester are Pam Garner, Brian Riewe, Cynthia Ris and Michelle Marti.

Two more students will be added this semester.

—Mark Penny

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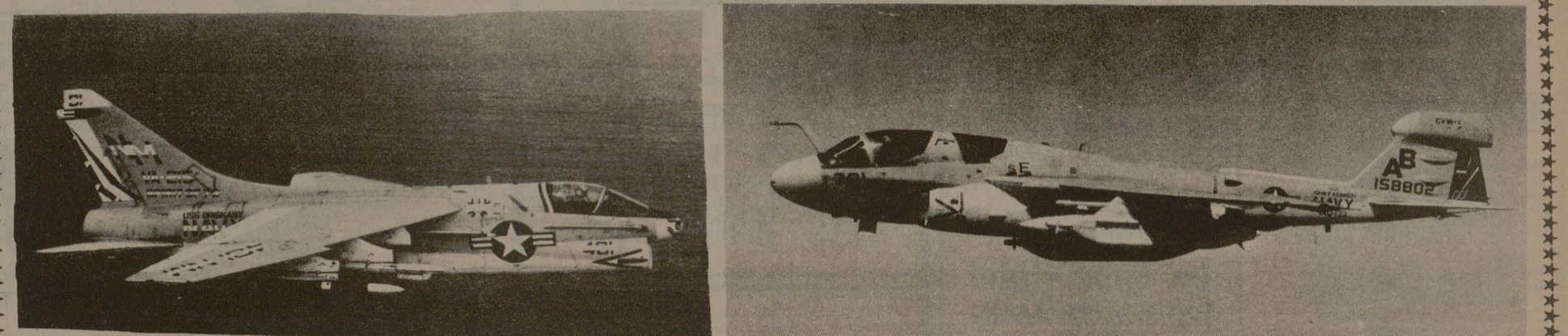
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