

Metal deposits may be no threat

Scientists are cautiously optimistic that heavy metal accumulations, such as lead or mercury, in materials dredged from Texas ship channels pose no threat to humans.

Concern that these potentially lethal elements could be transferred

to man via seafood seems to be waning in the face of the latest evidence.

The initial steps in this investigation are being carried out at Texas A&M University by Dr. Frank Slowey, and chemist, and Dr. Jerry Neff, a biologist, who are looking to see if dredged materials dropped

into clean areas will hurt or pollute the marine life.

Specifically, they are studying heavy metals to see if they are taken up and retained by salt and freshwater varieties of grass shrimp, marsh clams and marine worms.

"It has become a major concern to decide the fate of dredge materials," said Neff. "The fact that these materials from channels and harbors collect high concentrations of heavy metals is where we come in. If it is dropped in a new habitat will it contaminate the marine life already there?"

"We are using samples of dredge sediment from the Houston, Texas City, Freeport and Corpus Christi ship channels as well as freshwater material from Ashtabula, Ohio on Lake Erie. There are indications that all the sites have heavy metal pollution," Neff said.

Samples from all four sites were put in aquaria at A&M with samples of marine and freshwater animals for

60-90 day periods. The animals were analyzed to see how much heavy metal had been collected by the animals' tissues.

"We then drew correlations between the amount of pollutant in the sediment and the amount accumulated in the animals over a period of exposure," said Neff.

"To date we are finding very little heavy metal accumulation, much less than was expected," he said. "A few metals like iron, manganese and zinc tend to accumulate but rarely do the toxic metals such as lead, mercury and cadmium."

When metals are precipitated from the water they bind chemically to the mud, usually so tightly that they pass through the digestive systems of marine animals without being absorbed into their tissues.

So far there is little danger from heavy metals in dredge materials, Neff said, but hydrocarbons, pesticides and chemical by-products may be more dangerous.

Folk tale latest publication

Big Thicket lore by Bill Brett is the latest offering of the Texas A&M University Press.

The book, "The Stolen Steers: A Tale of the Big Thicket," (116 pages, \$6.75) includes a foreword by William A. Owens, who cites Brett's comment about the yarn: "And there wasn't a lie in the whole speech. Nor dang little truth."

Brett's narrator claims to have lived the story in Southeast Texas in the lean years around

the turn of the century. He steals a herd of steers, gets sick while getting away with them, is nursed back to health by a poor but generous black couple, and while repaying their kindness seals his own fate as he ensures their security.

Owens comments that although marks of artfulness and sophistication sometime show through, Brett has maintained the quality of the folk tale sufficiently for the reader to know

that his account is authentic. Brett is postmaster at the former oil well roughneck driller, cowhand, ranch hand, farmer, rancher, deputy construction worker, and driver and "anything else" would help raise a family. He is the author of a collection of stories, "Well, He Wasn't Know and I knowed So 'Til Him," as well as other non-fiction articles.

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New professor joins English department

Dr. Norman S. Grabo, a leading figure in the study of early American literature, will join the Texas A&M University faculty this fall as Distinguished Professor of English and director of the department's graduate program.

Grabo is currently a professor at the University of California-Berkeley. He became associated with that campus in 1963.

"Dr. Grabo is one of the foremost

authorities on the Colonial American period and we feel he will make an important contribution to our program," said Dr. David H. Stewart, head of English at A&M.

Since 1961, Grabo has authored three books and was co-author of two more. Among them are "Edward Taylor's Christographia" (1962) and "Edward Taylor's Treatise Concerning the Lord's Supper" (1966). He was a co-author of "American

Poetry and Prose" (1970).

He has written numerous articles and penned the introduction to the definitive edition of "The Works of Brockden Brown's 'Arthur Mervyn'" published by the University Press.

Grabo's degrees include a Ph.D. from Elmhurst (Ill.) College, M.A., University of California, Los Angeles, 1955, and Ph.D., State University and College of Arts and Sciences, Irvine campuses as well as John's (N.M.) College.

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