

# The Battalion

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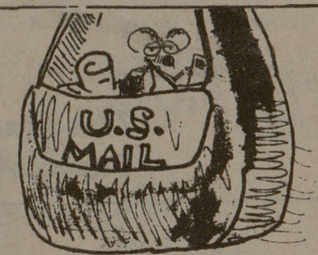
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## Opinions vary about housing costs

By KIM TYSON

Apartment construction is increasing, creating new units to be occupied in the Bryan-College Station area. However, the effect of this new building on rent prices is anybody's guess.

Although Bryan-College Station is one of the fastest growing areas in Texas, people who have studied the housing situation come up with different answers. Some say students can expect cheaper rates; others say this won't happen.

Karen Switzer, student development coordinator at Texas A&M University, says she sees a surplus developing.

"It goes back a couple of years when we could see enrollment mushrooming and housing mushrooming," Switzer says. "You could just see that the rate of housing was increasing over the enrollment rate."

Switzer has analyzed the housing situation for students for fall 1977, spring 1978 and fall 1978.

For spring 1977 Switzer says she knows of 412 units currently under construction that should be completed.

"Those 412 units will hold approximately 1,200 people," Switzer says. "Complete that with usual drop in enrollment of the student population in the spring and it will be even more competitive."

She says reasons for decreased enrollment in the spring include students graduating and drop outs.

Switzer has surveyed apartment complexes and building permits for the last three years. Her most recent study was to find vacancies in existing housing, units under construction and the trend in building permits issued. The study was made during September and finished Oct. 12.

"For students the situation is very good because they have options," Switzer says. "The community has developed to the point that there is competitive housing. We already are seeing different kinds of facilities catering to different clientele. What students will have to look forward to is price variation as well."

For next fall, Switzer estimates space for an additional 3,800 students. She says she determined this figure by adding together vacancies already known in apartments surveyed, units under construction and permits for two major complexes with 158 and 208 units. These two complexes are scheduled for completion by next fall.

Dr. Charles McCandless, director of academic planning and services for Texas A&M, says enrollment will be approximately 29,928 by fall 1978, up from 29,414 students this fall.

Dr. Arthur Wright, associate research economist at the Texas Real Estate Research Center, says he also believes more vacancies will be opening up in the next year, resulting in a more competitive market.

"My understanding is that there is ten percent vacancy right now and this may be up to 20 percent by the spring," Wright says.

He estimates these figures from talking with realtors and builders.

"Whether the situation improves next fall or not depends on student enrollment and building," Wright says. He says he knows of some apartment complexes with 25 percent vacancy right now.

Wright says he thinks a surplus is developing because there had been a shortage of housing for many years and now demand can't keep up with the new building activity. This can be seen in the increasing numbers of units completed each year: 545 (1975), 1215 (1976), and 1266 (August 1977).

More apartments are still being built because access to money is easier now. Wright says. He says housing was hard to find and building down in 1974 and 1975 because construction money was hard to obtain.

Although Switzer and Wright seem to agree on the possibility for many apartment complexes lowering rent, Bill Sisson, president of the Bryan-College Station Apartment Association, says students shouldn't expect cheaper rates.

The apartment association is composed of apartment complex owners, managers, management companies, an Off Campus Students Association representative and associate members, who include related merchants such as carpet, plumbing and insurance companies.

Sisson said the market now is very "soft," or competitive, but he added that prices probably will not go down to any great extent. He says prices will depend on the number of units built and the number of students who come to A&M.

The university controls the number of customers. He says, however, increasing construction costs preclude price decreases.

Realtor George Green also says he expects no price decrease even though there are more units on the market. He says building costs, expenses and mortgage prices will keep rates up. One of his apartment complexes, Shamrock I, has had rent raised 18 per cent since it was built in 1973, he says.

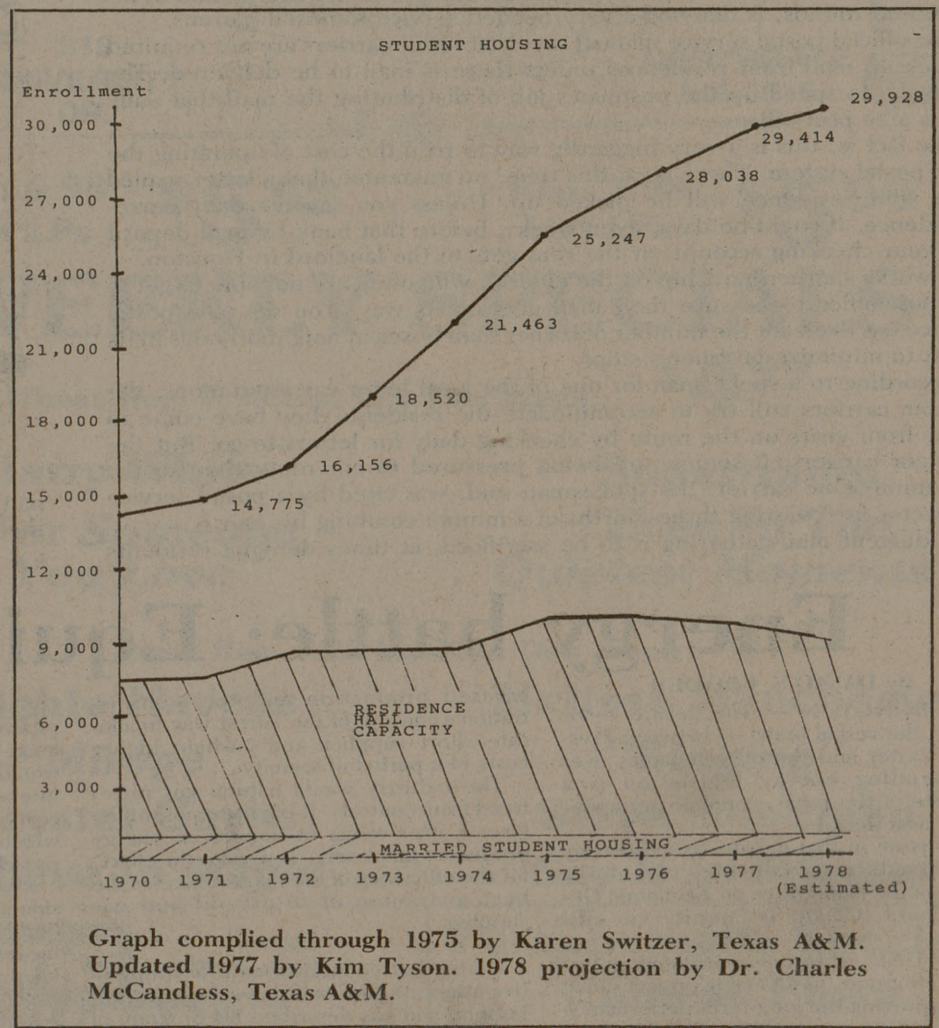
Dale Watson, a graduate student in Urban and Regional Planning, said the problem is difficult to define. "There is a lot of guess work. You have to assume a lot of things and estimate. Nobody knows what the market will be."

However, more apartments don't mean more housing availability and better selection. Vacancies in apartments may be affected by areas other than Texas A&M. Industrial development creating new jobs and personnel would increase the number of buyers.

The attractiveness of apartments can also affect the number of units students would consider for housing. A ten-year-old apartment may not be acceptable to a large number of students, and thus be actually not considered available.

Square-footage of apartments also vary dramatically. A one-bedroom apartment now may be much smaller than a "one-bedroom" apartment ten years ago, or even in another apartment complex.

Hence housing may be increasing in Bryan-College Station, but how it will affect the student's pocketbook depends on who you ask.



The pumpkin runs again!

Charging down the sidewalk toward the Band dorm, Company C-2's juniors begin the "run of the Great Pumpkin". The tradi-

tional event has been held for the last 12 years.

Battalion photo by Ken Herrera

## Great Pumpkin makes annual run

By ROBIN LINN

The Great Pumpkin lives at Texas A&M! While spooks, goblins, devils, and monsters were returning home from trick-or-treating and performing fiendish acts, they stopped to see the pumpkin make his annual Halloween run around the Corps dorm area.

The event has been carried on by company C-2 for about 12 years. And rumor has it that the first Great Pumpkin is now a professor of Engineering and Design Graphics 105 at A&M.

Theories as to how it all got started are vague. "It started out as some kind of war between C-2 and the Aggie Band," said Bill Shelby, commanding officer of C-2. "Back in 1965 a senior who was a fan of Charles Schulz got it started," he said. A&M's Great Pumpkin has been a way to harass band members on Halloween. Junior cadets are the only participants.

Preparation for the run of the Great Pumpkin actually begins a week before Halloween, when two pumpkins, one small and one large are put in the hall of C-2's dorm.

The larger pumpkin is eventually destined to rest on the head of the cadet selected as the Great Pumpkin.

The small one is known as Mr. B.Q., and sits in the corner of one hall. Mr. Pumpkin is praised all week while Mr. B.Q. is

scorned. "B.Q." is a cadet term for Aggie Band members.

Halloween night arrives and the juniors get the "privilege" of competing to see who will be the Great Pumpkin for that year — by bobbing for apples.

"I've been thinking about this all week," said Jim Sabersula, a C-2 junior. Two cadets go after the same apple — and the cadet who "loses" is challenged again until one person remains apple-less.

Last night, the competition ended with juniors Les Chipman and Mark Mosley. "And may the great pumpkin be with you," are the words that begin the final round.

With their heads locked against one another, the two battled it out for about three minutes. The Chipman raised his head with the apple between his teeth. Mosley became the Great Pumpkin.

Outside the dorm a crowd of around 400 spectators has gathered to see the event. The group included students dressed as rabbits, devils, lions, Confederate soldiers, and Raggedy Ann dolls.

Other C-2 juniors surrounded Mosley and lit their broomstick torches. Their goal: to march through the band dorm with Mosley's pumpkin head intact. This year, they didn't quite make it. The band was prepared. They had set up a barricade of people armed with water-filled trash cans.

## Price controls unfair to Texas says Walzel

By KEVIN VENNOR

If President Carter has his way, the natural gas prices for the Bryan-College Station area will be going down.

Sound good? It doesn't to many Texans who are associated with the oil and gas companies and to others who are interested in what will be best (in their opinion) for Texas and the nation regarding energy supply and economics.

Consumers of natural gas in the Bryan-College Station area are currently paying about \$2 per MCF (1,000 cubic feet) while persons out of state can buy the same Texas-produced gas at rates as low as 50 cents per MCF and not more than \$1.47 per MCF.

Why the inequity? Because the federal government has price controls on interstate gas (shipped out of Texas) and the intrastate gas (shipped to areas within Texas) are not controlled. This is unfair to Texas consumers and gas producers, says Jim Walzel, senior vice president of Houston Pipeline Co.

Walzel says that persons out of the state are buying gas for less than the cost of its production, which is about \$2

per MCF. He says this contributed to the gas shortage last winter because gas companies were not using all producing wells. Walzel says it is not good business to produce gas for more money than it sells for, so gas companies slacked off and the nation had a shortage.

Walzel says there is a good chance of future gas shortages if federal regulations are not lifted. Too many out of state people who use the artificially cheap gas would not if the gas were on the free market system as it is here in Texas, Walzel says. He adds that his company favors a phased deregulation, so that the price decrease will be less dramatic.

Texas has a bona fide free market where the gas has been selling for what people are willing to pay for it. He adds that the price is pretty high, but everybody has gas. The price of gas is cheaper (because of control) on the East Coast, but supplies remain scarce.

This does not have to be the case, according to Dr. Richard Davison, professor of chemical engineering at Texas A&M University.

"We do not have an energy shortage," says Davison, "we have an energy crisis."

Davison says decontrol is absolutely necessary or Texas as well as Eastern states will have shortages. He also says that decontrol works two ways to benefit the nation. First, he says deregulation will make prices go up.

"But that is good. That will limit consumption and therefore help conserve our energy resources," Davison says.

Second, deregulation will yield profits for the gas companies, which will give them capital and incentive to reinvest in the energy business. "And this is what the nation needs — more energy," Davison says.

Davison adds that these two points relate to all forms of energy, not just gas resources.

"People don't seem to realize that the price of oil has not gone up overall, any more than a lot of other things," he says. "When I was a boy, a gallon of gasoline cost 16 cents and a hamburger cost a dime. Today a hamburger has gone from a dime to about 85 cents while oil has gone from 16 cents to about 50 cents. So what shall we do? Price control McDonald's? Shoot the farmer?"

Davison says his point is that price controls don't solve problems and that the cost of gas should be allowed to seek its own level.

"If controls are continued on gas today, then tomorrow the government will be controlling another energy source and the next day there is no telling what it may want to control," says Dr. Joseph S. Osoba, associate professor of petroleum engineering at Texas A&M University.

The marketplace has always guided the prices of all commodities and that is what is needed with gas Osoba says.

There are vast quantities of known gas deposits in Texas and off its shore, says Osoba, but the cost to obtain these sources will cost the oil and gas companies much more because it is deeper and harder to get. He says the only way the government is going to get the oil and gas

companies to seek new energy sources is to allow them to make some money so that can increase exploration and drilling.

Will the increase in exploration and drilling lead to an increase in gas prices for area residents? A. L. Bartley, manager of Lone Star Gas Co. in Bryan, says that initially, prices may show a slight increase until the market determines the level at which it will stabilize. He added, though, that the main impact of deregulation will be for those out of state.

"I think all the people in Texas would like to see the people in the East paying the same amount for gas that they do," Bartley says.

*"People don't seem to realize that the price of oil has not gone up overall, any more than a lot of other things... Today a hamburger has gone from a dime to about 85 cents while oil has gone from 16 cents to about 50 cents."*

— Richard Davison  
Professor of Chemical Engineering

Dr. Wendy Gramm, associate professor of economics at Texas A&M University, says that she too favors the deregulation of natural gas.

"It's a matter of supply and demand. If prices are set too low, the demand will not be met and if prices are allowed to rise, then the supplies will become adequate," she says.

Davison points out that the situation is a matter of dollars and sense.

Natural gas is the premium of all fuels and that is why it is in such great demand, he says. It is cheaper than the fuel oil which many people used in other parts of the United States before natural gas was made available to them at an artificially low cost. Natural gas also burns cleaner, Davison says. "That's like selling premium gasoline for less than regular. We're selling the premium fuel for less than not-so-good fuel."

## FDA investigates protein diet

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The government has started an investigation into reports of several deaths among persons using the popular predigested liquid protein diets, it was learned today.

The deaths, which may number as many as 11, have not been confirmed as being directly linked to the diet fad. But, the Food and Drug Administration said it is working with the Center for Disease Control to check medical records and autopsy reports, if any, to see if there is a link between the diets and deaths.

In some cases, an FDA spokesman said, the agency has been informed directly of suspected problems from

the diet.

One case was reported by a doctor who had a relative whose death was supposedly linked to the diet, the agency said.

In recent weeks the FDA has announced two recalls of predigested liquid protein products because they were packaged in bottles that were defective and could have caused bacterial growth.

At the same time the agency has been saying it questions the validity of the diet to do anything more than a simple restriction of caloric intake would accomplish. It also said it is concerned about persons using the diet without medical supervision.