



Rapid detection and warning of tornadoes threatening Brazos County are primarily responsibilities of these three men, pictured here in the Radar Control Room located in the Oceanography-Meteorology Building on the Texas A&M campus. From left, they are

Charlie Brenton, assistant tornado warning officer for Brazos County, Dr. Vance Moyer, professor of meteorology, and Jake Cangelose, director of Brazos County Civil Defense.

Battalion photo by Susan Webb

## Radar—detector of a killer

By DAVID TEWES

A killer, destructive, short lived, little or no warning. That briefly describes the most intense storm known to man — the tornado.

In just seconds a tornado can turn a modern city into a twisted mess of death and destruction. It can leave hundreds homeless and turn dreams into despair.

What can be done about it? Not much currently. But the Brazos County civil defense is trying to reduce the potentially destructive results of tornadoes here with a detection and warning system.

"In order to protect the citizens, you have to provide a warning system to reduce loss of life and injuries," Jake Cangelose, Brazos County civil defense director and chairman, said recently. "Locally, we place our emphasis on tornado warnings."

This is why the local civil defense has civilian and governmental people who watch for tornadoes, hail, high wind and flooding.

"We're part of the warning system primarily because we have the equipment here," said Dr. Vance Moyer, director of the radar warning system. He said the radar atop Texas A&M University's Oceanography and Meteorology Building is the most important tool they have.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has radar located in Galveston, Stephenville and Longview. Bryan-College Station is outside their range, so the radar here fills the gap.

The first hint that conditions are ripe for tornado formation comes across the NWS teletype. The meteorology department on campus, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Public Safety (DPS) each have a teletype.

People in the meteorology department check the teletype only from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If bad weather is reported after 5 p.m., the FAA or DPS calls Moyer.

Moyer then checks the radar and

if he thinks Bryan-College Station will be affected, he sends out weather spotters. These are the highway patrol as well as C.B. and ham radio operators.

The Bryan and College Station police departments, sheriff's office, news media, fire department and public schools are warned via civil defense radio. The radio operates on 155.08 megacycles and can be bought by anyone.

A continuous, wavering whistle from the Texas A&M steam plant is a public warning that a tornado is headed toward the area. The distance the whistle can be heard is limited, so police cruise the streets with their sirens continuously on.

This system was last used in 1956 when a tornado was reported moving toward College Station. It lifted to roof-top level narrowly missing the city, and there were no deaths or injuries.

Bryan-College Station is subject to two kinds of tornadoes. The long-lived tornadoes usually give more warning time and are the most intense. The short-lived tornadoes, less intense, hit unexpectedly.

Moyer said the safest shelter from a tornado is an underground storm cellar, which is costly to build. He said the next safest place is a home's bathtub. "It's the strongest part of the house," Moyer said.

Because most tornadoes move only 35 to 40 m.p.h. and have a narrow path, they can be outrun by moving at a right angle from the storm.

"People who live in mobile homes should really make sure they've got a good tie-down system," Moyer said. "It would prevent the mobile home from being tossed around like a match box."

The chance of a specific area being hit by a tornado is rare, of being hit twice is even more rare. But there have been many exceptions.

In 1922, Austin had two tor-

nadoes in rapid succession. Oklahoma City has had 26 tornadoes since 1892. Baldwin, Miss., had two in a span of 25 minutes in 1942.

From 1953 to 1969, Texas had more tornadoes and related deaths than any state. There were 1,758 tornadoes and 234 deaths in that time period.

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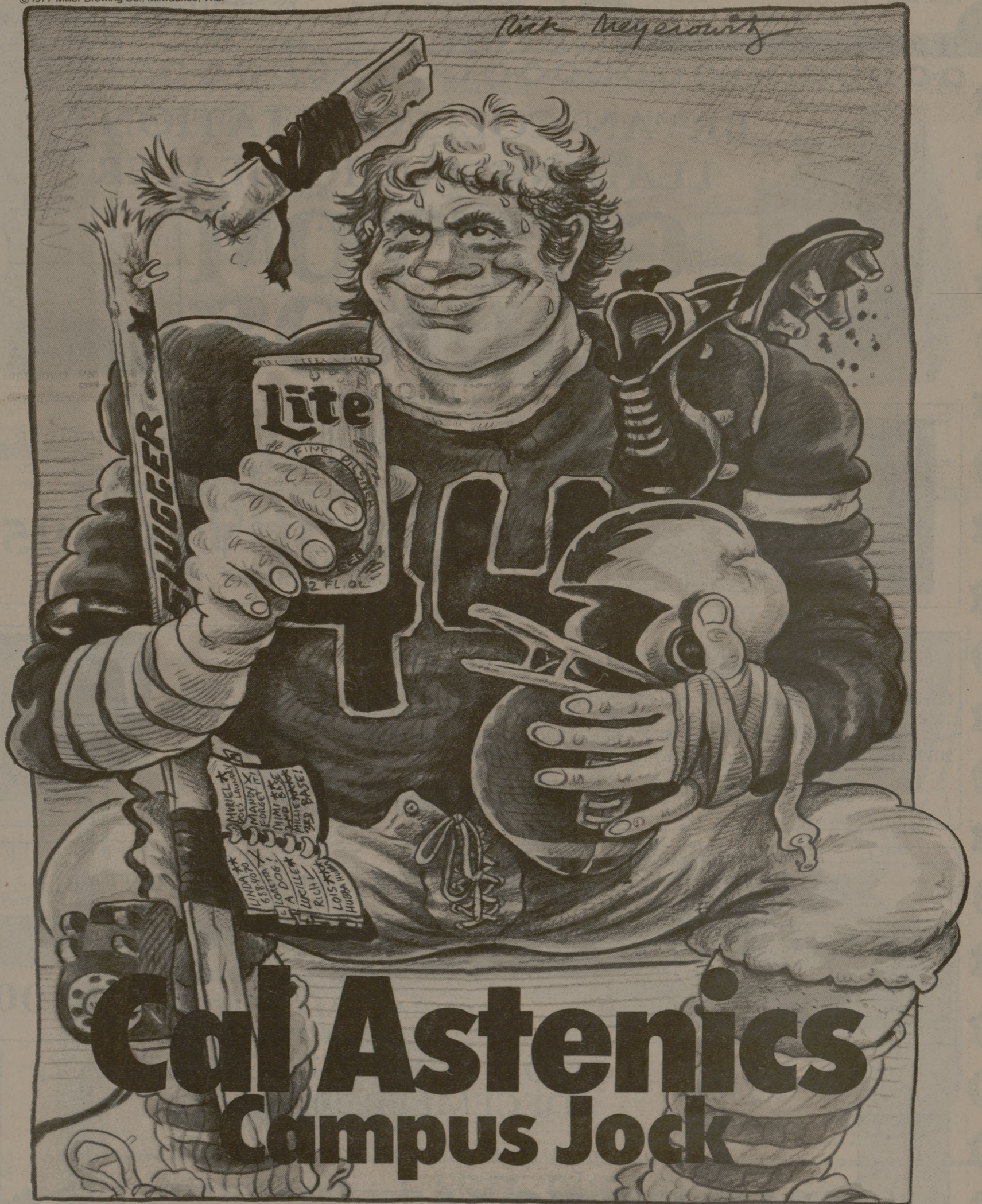
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