

'Robbery' at Last National Bank

By BETH CALHOUN

When the Last National Bank of College Station was robbed, the culprits didn't have to dynamite a vault. The loot was "lifted" off the wall.

The restaurant-bar opened last November in the Bank of A&M's old facilities at 411 Texas Ave. South. The management wanted to preserve the atmosphere of a bank, so they arranged with the U.S. Department of the Treasury to be sent \$1,260 in one-dollar bills. These were mounted with two-way tape on a wall in the old vault room and covered with plexiglas. The result was expensive wallpaper.

The bills are all new, all in serial number order and to be used as a

display only. They aren't for circulation.

Two of the one-dollar bills were taken sometime between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. last Friday.

"Around five o'clock, one of our employees noticed the bills were missing," said manager Gary Cooper.

The side of the plexiglas where the bills were taken is covered by five-foot high plants.

"They pulled the plexiglas back and took only two of the bills," Cooper said. "It had to be hard to do."

"They could've taken 25 or 30 — the whole row, but they were probably too scared."

He and his staff watch the money, Cooper said, but "not always that

closely. We didn't think anything like this would ever happen."

If the bills are circulated, they would be hard to trace, Cooper said, because even though the serial numbers are on file, only two are missing and they aren't in large denominations.

A \$250 reward is offered for return of the bills. "No questions asked," Cooper said.

He added that the collection is devalued because of the missing bills.

"I feel they were taken as a souvenir," he said. "I hope we'll get them back."

Teachers learn writing

To teach good writing to students, one must teach good writing to teachers.

One solution in recent years has been the workshop for composition teachers, but such a measure has sometimes been unavailable to schools in rural areas and smaller towns around Texas.

Now, there could be an answer at Texas A&M University, where officials have received \$20,000 from the Sid W. Richardson Foundation of Fort Worth to plan and conduct such programs later this year for the 59 school districts in Region VI Educational Service Center.

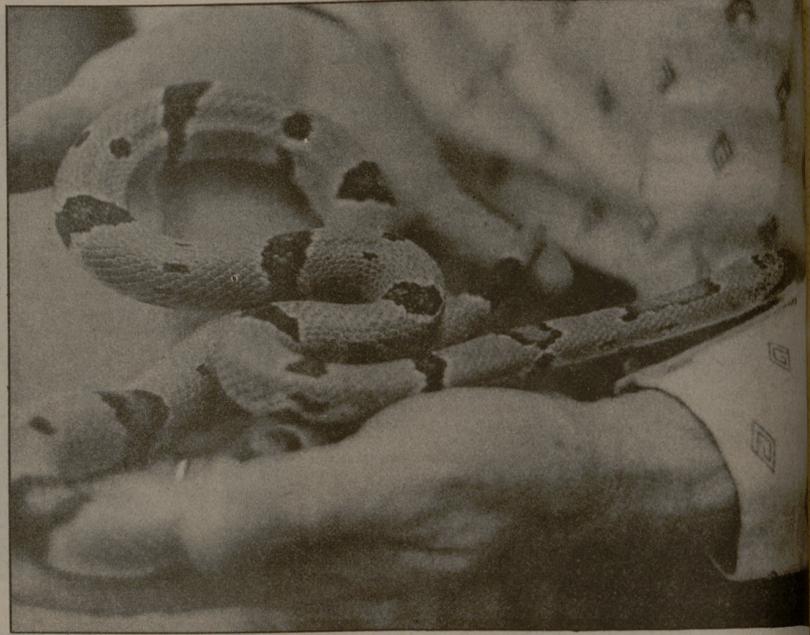
Region VI, which covers a large portion of East Texas, has its headquarters at Huntsville, and organiz-

ers say the workshop, specifically keyed to smaller school districts, will be held there.

Observers of three urban school districts — Houston, Corpus Christi and Fort Worth — will be participating in the workshop and will also carry news of its outcome to other service centers which might consider similar seminars for smaller schools in their area.

The Richardson Foundation is dedicated to supporting such programs, said Val Wilkie Jr., executive vice president.

The objective of the workshop is to give the composition teacher more skills to impart to students because of continued criticism about today's students.



Dr. James Dixon confidently holds a Mexican king snake, knowing that his squirming friend is like the majority of snakes in Texas — non-poisonous. Helpful snakes like this one eat ro-

sters and other pests but still prompt gasps and shivering spines when the snakes enter crowded rooms.

Battalion photo by Larry Chandler

Snakes deserve respect — for killing pests, not people

By TRICIA BRUNHART

Have you ever wondered if the snake you were about to kill is poisonous or not? Well, if you live in Texas it probably isn't, because says Dr. James R. Dixon, approximately 99 percent of Texas snakes are non-poisonous.

Dixon, a professor of wildlife and fisheries sciences at Texas A&M University said Wednesday that snakes are useful to man because they help maintain the balance of nature, by preying on rodents. Certain varieties of snakes, like Decay's snake, Dixon said, feed on slugs, which are pests of cultivated plants, he said.

Snakes thrive during warm periods, Dixon said, and therefore are seen most frequently in the spring and fall. In the spring, snakes come out during the day to feed and breed, and in the fall they come out to feed before hibernating, he said. When it is very hot in the summer, snakes become nocturnal and mainly can be seen at night.

There are four basic types of poisonous snakes in Texas: the rattlesnake, of which there are at least eight varieties; the cottonmouth; the coral snake; and the cop-

pehead, which is locally the most common poisonous snake.

Dixon said it is almost impossible to give a description of the poisonous snakes for identification, because the non-poisonous snakes share similar patterns with the poisonous ones.

Snakes will sometimes not inject any venom when they bite, Dixon said.

He suggested putting a tourniquet on the wounded limb and wrapping the bite with ice to slow down blood circulation. He advised against an extremely tight tourniquet and cutting the wound.

Most deaths occur, Dixon said, when people are bitten directly in the vein. If a person has been drinking alcohol, the spread of venom and blood circulation is increased, he said.

In the United States, Dixon continued, there are more deaths from bee stings than from snakebites.

A person will usually know if he was bitten by a poisonous snake because he will experience severe pain, "like 50 bees hitting you at one time and in one place," Dixon said.

He said the treatment which doctors in San Antonio are recommending for snakebite involves cutting a

four-inch flap of tissue on three sides of the bite. Then the doctor pulls the tissue back. If hemorrhaging is occurring, the snake was not poisonous. However, if it is hemorrhaging, the doctor would scrape the material out and tries to get all the poison out, Dixon said.

Snake venom consists of two elements: the hemotoxic element affects the circulatory system and the neurotoxic element that affects the nervous system.

The coral snake for example, has only five to thirty percent of the hemotoxic element, while the rattlesnake has only five to 30 percent of the neurotoxic element.

There are problems with snakebite serum, Dixon said, because venom can vary among snakes from different countries. As snakebite serums are specifically designed for each country, he added.

Dixon said the best precaution for people always to look before the step. He also recommends carrying staff when hiking, especially in an area is known to be snake infested. The staff can be used to tap along ground while climbing, and to alert sleeping snake so it has plenty of time to leave.

Thought it was cold? You're right

January, 1978, goes into the records as the coldest in Texas in more than 50 years.

It occurred, said state climatologist John Griffiths, without any record low temperatures, or lows even approaching records.

"The official low temperature for the month at Easterwood Airport was 21 degrees, which is not all that low for a January here," the Texas A&M University meteorology profes-

sor remarked. Januarys of 1976 and 1977 had lows in the mid-teens.

Last month included 18 days with freezing temperatures, normally a winter total for the area. The National Weather Service recorded 92 straight hours of freezing temperatures. It went from 1 a.m. Jan. 19 through 9 p.m. Jan. 22.

"As far as we are aware, that is a record," Griffiths added. He noted that the nature of records for some periods rule out certainty.

"We do have records for an 84-hour span of below-32 temperatures," he said.

Last month's 40.5-degree average was colder than January 1930, the previous record, by a tenth of a degree. It normally hits a mean temperature about 10 degrees warmer, near 51, Griffiths said. January 1976 averaged nearly 50, and last year 41.2 degrees.

Lack of daytime warming over whole month explains the new record low monthly average. The maximum averaged 48 degrees, eclipsing the previous low in that category by two degrees for another record.

But January 1978 contains another peculiarity, in view of records, Griffiths said. The high was 82 degrees. For the first days of the month, that was a degree short of the record, 83 on Jan. 17, 1917.

Griffiths observed that the records coupled with recent unusually cool winters, do not necessarily indicate the onset of an ice year thing," he said. "We've had that way before."

The NWS outlook for February he added, is for cooler than here.

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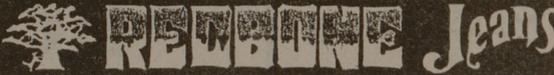
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