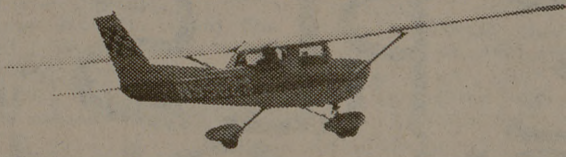


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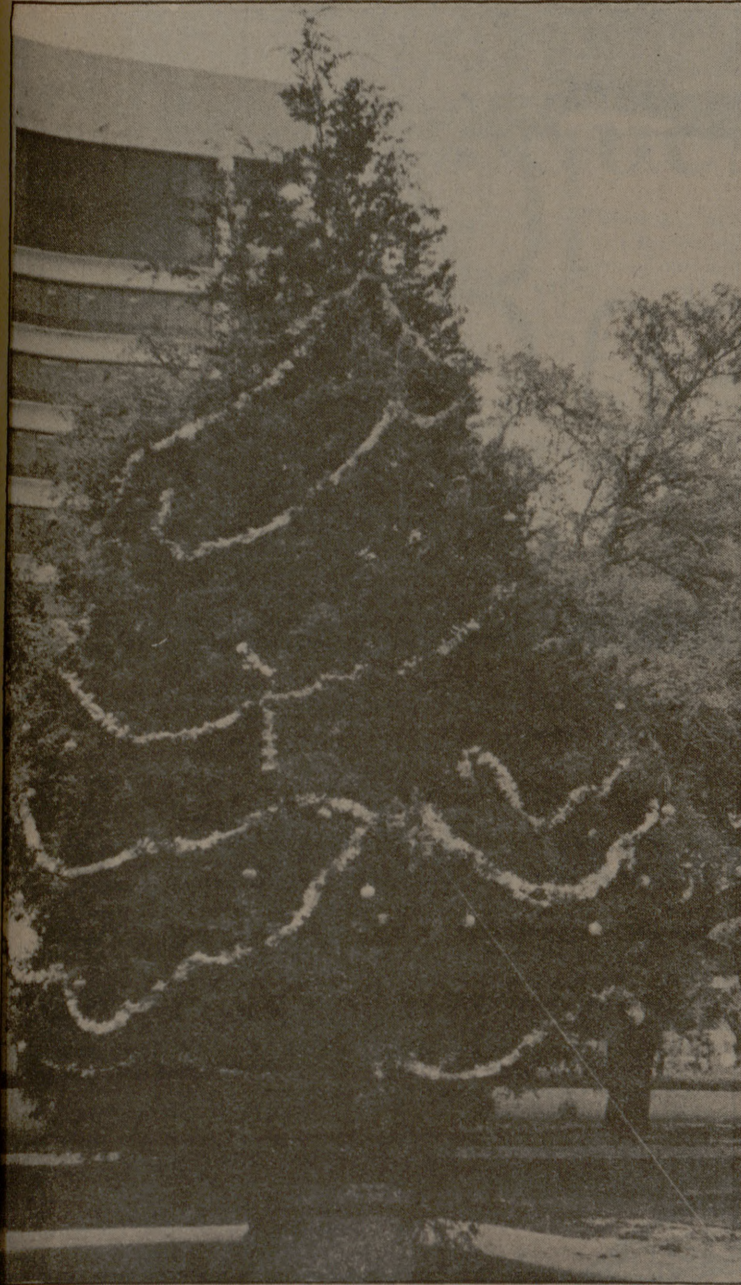
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Battalion photo by Hurlie Collier

*I'm dreaming of a . . .*

Residents of Hart Hall Tuesday decorated this tree in front of their dorm as a present to Texas A&M University. If conditions hold, College Station will have a gray Christmas, though snow moved into the Texas Panhandle earlier this week.

**Chain letter leaves thousands poorer**

United Press International  
SAN FRANCISCO — The "Circle of Gold" chain letter, which started in the San Francisco Bay area two months ago, has now completed its own circle around the country, making a few people rich, but leaving behind thousands of people who are \$100 poorer.

Postal inspectors say they are closing in on at least one person suspected of using the mails illegally. They admit it is kind of late, but say it takes time to investigate chain letters.

Besides, the "Circle of Gold" was a little different from most chain letters. It was passed around or sold hand-to-hand at parties or in small groups, and the only feasible prosecution involved the mailing of money after the letter had been sold in person.

As a player in the "Circle of Gold," one buys the letter for \$100. He pays the seller \$50 and mails another \$50 to the top name in a list of 12 on the letter. Then he sells the letter to someone else for \$100, putting his name on the bottom of the list and crossing out the top name.

If the chain is unbroken, he would soon collect more than \$100,000. Some people are reported to have

received up to \$30,000.

The "Circle of Gold" letter first surfaced in San Francisco and suburban Marin County at parties among a theatrical crowd. It quickly spread to Chicago, New York City, Vermont, down the East Coast into North Carolina. It turned up recently in such places as Nashville, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; Houston, and Santa Fe, N.M., on the way back to California.

It also has been reported in Hawaii.

"Someone is now sending it in the mail to people throughout the United States," San Francisco Postal Inspector R.L. Schlueter said. "We are getting evidence together and will take it to the U.S. attorney."

The originators of the "Circle of Gold" letters protected themselves by avoiding the mail in letter "sales," although they could be prosecuted for fraud under other laws if caught.

Judith Ford, of the San Francisco district attorney's office, said no one has been prosecuted because "it wasn't clear that the people giving the chain letter parties were actually initiating the letter, but maybe were being used. We discouraged that by notifying them the operation of a scheme like this was illegal."

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