

# Under the earth

## Wells have ample water for Bryan-College Station

By DOUGLAS F. GRAHAM  
Battalion Staff

Aggies have never been known as harriers of radical sentiment, but Texas A&M University does have an underground water supply.

Like most of Brazos County, the University uses wells to supply itself with water.

Wells are an important source of water in Texas, supplying almost all the water for places ranging in size from San Antonio to Snook.

Because wells are so important in Brazos County, they merit a close look from the people they supply with fresh water.

They are drilled to depths ranging from just 30 or so feet, to more than several thousand feet deep. The water is under natural pressure, but pumps are often used to supply additional pressure and to draw out additional water. Wells always tap into geological formations known as aquifers, which also bear some examination.

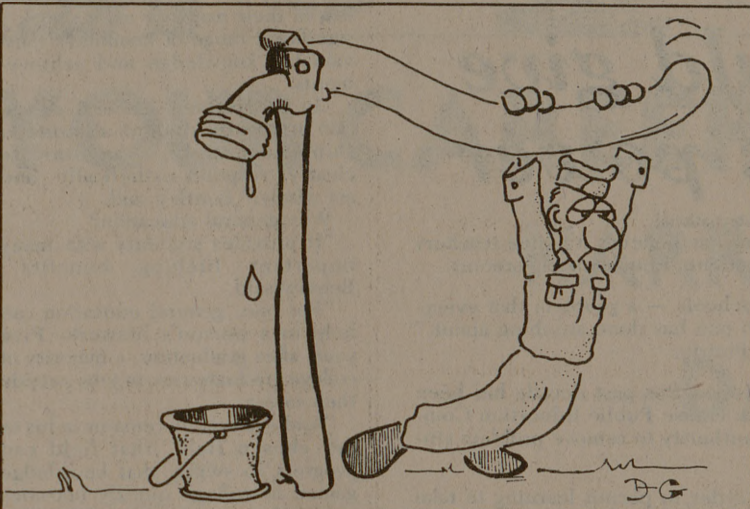
Aquifers, at their simplest, are a layer of sand, or other porous soil, sandwiched between two layers of impervious rock. Water does not penetrate the bottom layer of rock and is sponged up to the sand layer. Since these formations slope down, water drains deeper and deeper, causing tremendous back-pressure, which forces water up through the wells.

The aquifers are replenished by water which soaks down through the soil. When more water is drawn off than is replaced by nature, the water table begins to sink.

At first glance, it seems strange

that the Brazos River is ignored and people drill for water. The decision is not based on ease of extraction, however, but on the quality of the water.

Many people agreed with Dr. Jack Runkles of the Texas Water Resources Institute at Texas A&M University, who said ground water is generally organically purer than surface water — rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. The earth acts as a filter for bacteria and other organisms.



But in addition to organic problems, the Brazos water has a fairly high amount of sodium and other salts in it, he said.

"Ground water is generally better in quality than surface water," Runkles said. "Generally you have to chlorinate it, sometimes flourinate

it. Irons or other minerals sometimes need treatment, too, but it's generally better."

The sodium salts can be harmful, Runkles said. He cited work done by another Texas A&M professor, Harold Wolf, which indicates that excess sodium may lead to heart trouble.

Sodium's effect on agriculture can also be serious, said Dr. B.L. Harris, a soil and water specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension

fall late in the year and washes the built-up sodium away.

Another benefit of ground water is access. A well can be drilled anywhere without the expense of laying long pipelines.

In addition, wells are not subject to state control, except in western parts of the state. All surface water sources are under control of the Texas Department of Water Resources (TDWR). "Unless you are out west where they have some rules such as spacing of wells, you can sink a well anywhere you want," Jerry Boyd, a section chief in the permits division of the TDWR, said. Such regulation is supposed to protect aquifers from depletion, but that is not a problem in the Bryan-College Station area.

Carl Ryan, founder of a local father and son water drilling company, said the water level in the Brazos area is holding steady.

"I checked a pump the other day in a well I drilled 14 years ago," he said. "The water level used to be 59 feet; now it is 60."

Runkles said there is no short-term basis for worry about the local water supply.

"When they begin to mine lignite in the Carrizo-Wilcox outcropping near Fairfield," he said, "we will have to start watching for contamination. He said if there is contamination, it will occur gradually."

The Wilcox-Carrizo layer, which is between 2,700 and 4,000 feet deep, and the shallower Sparta Sand Strata, which is 600 feet deep, are the two aquifer layers tapped by Bryan-College Station.

Micheal Collins, an assistant at Bryan's water pumping station, says his station pumped over 211 million gallons of water in January.

"If you think that's a lot, most big cities run through that much water in a day," he said.

Summer consumption will climb to more than twice that figure, he said.

And very little of that water will be used for drinking, Harris said. "You use two quarts a day for drinking," he said. "And you use 5 gallons every time you flush the toilet."

Yet, even though little water is used for drinking, it all must be potable. A.C. Allen with the Brazos-Bryan Health Unit is the sanitarian who enforces water purity in the area. According to Texas statutes for the health department for which he works, 45-50 water samples are taken at various times each month.

Though Allen said some of the smaller municipal water supplies have experienced problems, "we haven't had a bad test in years."

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## Cancer research funds in Texas losing ground to disease, House told

United Press International

AUSTIN — An associate administrator of the M.D. Anderson Cancer and Tumor Institute in Houston Wednesday said cancer patients are increasing in Texas while research funds are becoming more scarce.

Richard Fayette told a House Ways and Means subcommittee Texas population increased 9 percent during 1969-76 but cancer patients increased 26 percent during the same period, making cancer the

No. 2 cause of deaths in the state. Almost 20,000 Texans die each year from the disease.

He said in the past five years, funds for cancer research have increased 30 percent at M.D. Anderson, but the money is not buying as much research as in the past.

Fayette testified in support of a bill by Rep. Betty Denton, D-Waco, which would dedicate \$1 of the tax collected on every 1,000 cigarettes to a Cancer Research

Fund, which would be administered by M.D. Anderson. The fund would receive \$33 million in 1980 and would increase to almost \$40 million during 1984. Currently, the state collects \$307 million yearly from the cigarette tax.

"Our research funds are flattening out," Fayette said. "We have more dollars being allocated, but what they are buying in research is eroding."

He also said that many potential

avenues of research are being neglected because of lack of funds. Fayette said current funding only allows the M.D. Anderson staff to pursue 30 percent of the possible avenues of research.

"Prevention is one major avenue where research has not been enough," he said.

Curt Reimann, executive director of the state chapter of the American Cancer Society, said the research fund would encourage more work at M.D. Anderson, which is now considered the top cancer research center in the world.

"But we've just never had enough money for research," he said.

## Consol chooses three candidates for superintendent job interviews

Three candidates for the superintendent position of A&M Consolidated School District have agreed to be interviewed, said Board President Bruce Robeck at a board meeting Wednesday.

The candidates will be interviewed next week. They are Dr. H. Richard Burnett, assistant superintendent of instruction of A&M Consolidated; Dr. Bruce R. Anderson, superintendent of schools at Richfield, Minn.; and Dr. Bill Kennedy, superintendent of schools at Cedar Hill, Texas.

Interview dates are next Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. They will be held in executive session, Robeck said.

He added that more candidates may be interviewed later. Fred Hopson, the present superintendent of A&M Consoli-

dated, resigned last week to take the superintendent position at Leander Independent School District. The resignation becomes effective March 1.

Burnett will become acting superintendent on that date.

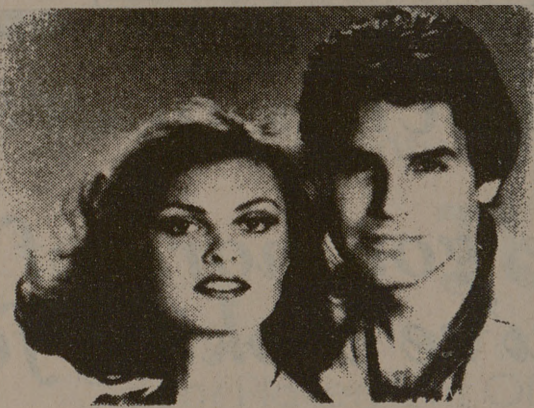
The board also continued its re-

view of personnel contracts and extended those of Naomi Shannon, director of elementary curriculum, and Judy Caskey, director of secondary curriculum, "pending reassignment by the new superintendent and approval of the school board."

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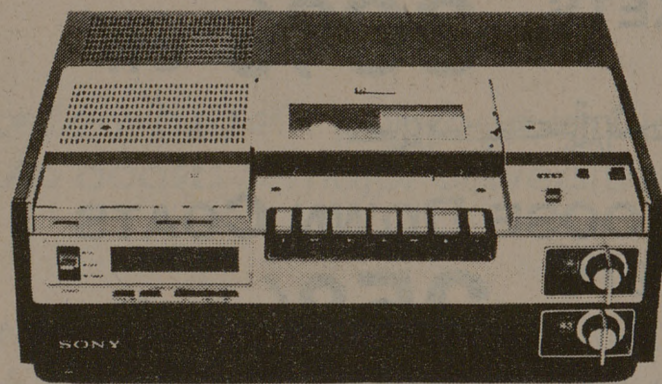


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