

THE BATTALION

Vol. 72 No. 169
10 Pages

Wednesday, July 11, 1979
College Station, Texas

News Dept. 845-2611
Business Dept. 845-2611

Weather

Fair to partly cloudy today with a high of 96 and a low of 75. No rain mentioned.

Oilspill edges toward Texas, may threaten resort beaches

United Press International
CORPUS CHRISTI — Federal officials said Tuesday a gigantic oil slick, growing by 30,000 barrels a day and projected to become the worst in history, was edging north from Mexico toward the Texas coast and would threaten resort beaches and shrimp spawning grounds by July 23.

As the slick — 300 mile long by 25 miles wide — moved northward at 10 miles a day, the U.S. National Response Team, comprised of representatives from several concerned federal agencies, set up headquarters in Corpus Christi to plot strategy for keeping the oil off the beaches and out of the bays where sealife spawns.

In addition, the Regional Response Team — made up of state and local officials — was mobilized and scheduled a meeting in New Orleans Friday to discuss the situation.

"It's hard to say with any certainty exactly where it's going to go right now," said Craig Hooper of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in Boulder, Colo., in charge of efforts to track the huge oil slick.

The slick is being fed by an oil well which blew out June 3 off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. The well has been spewing 1.2 million gallons of oil a day, feeding

the slick which ranges from ¼-inch thick near the well to a mere sheen as it spreads northward.

Officials say it may be the end of August before slant holes can be completed to fill in the well. By that time the spill was expected to surpass the largest in history, which occurred when the supertanker Amoco Cadiz dumped 1.5 million barrels of crude oil into coastal waters off France beginning in March 1978.

Hooper said an initial NOAA flyover on Friday led to a projection that the oil slick would reach the mouth of the Rio Grande within two weeks. Beyond lies one of the nation's fastest growing resorts, South Padre Island, which stretches 100 miles up the coast to Corpus Christi's Padre Island National Seashore.

"Now we're not sure it's going to come ashore yet. We're saying it should reach there (the U.S.-Mexico border) by the 23rd," Hooper said. Hooper said currents and winds determine where the oil will travel.

"Now it's heading north right toward the Texas border. A lot of it is close to shore, and if there is a wind coming from the Southeast — and often this time of year there is — it's possible some of it could go ashore in there. I don't want to

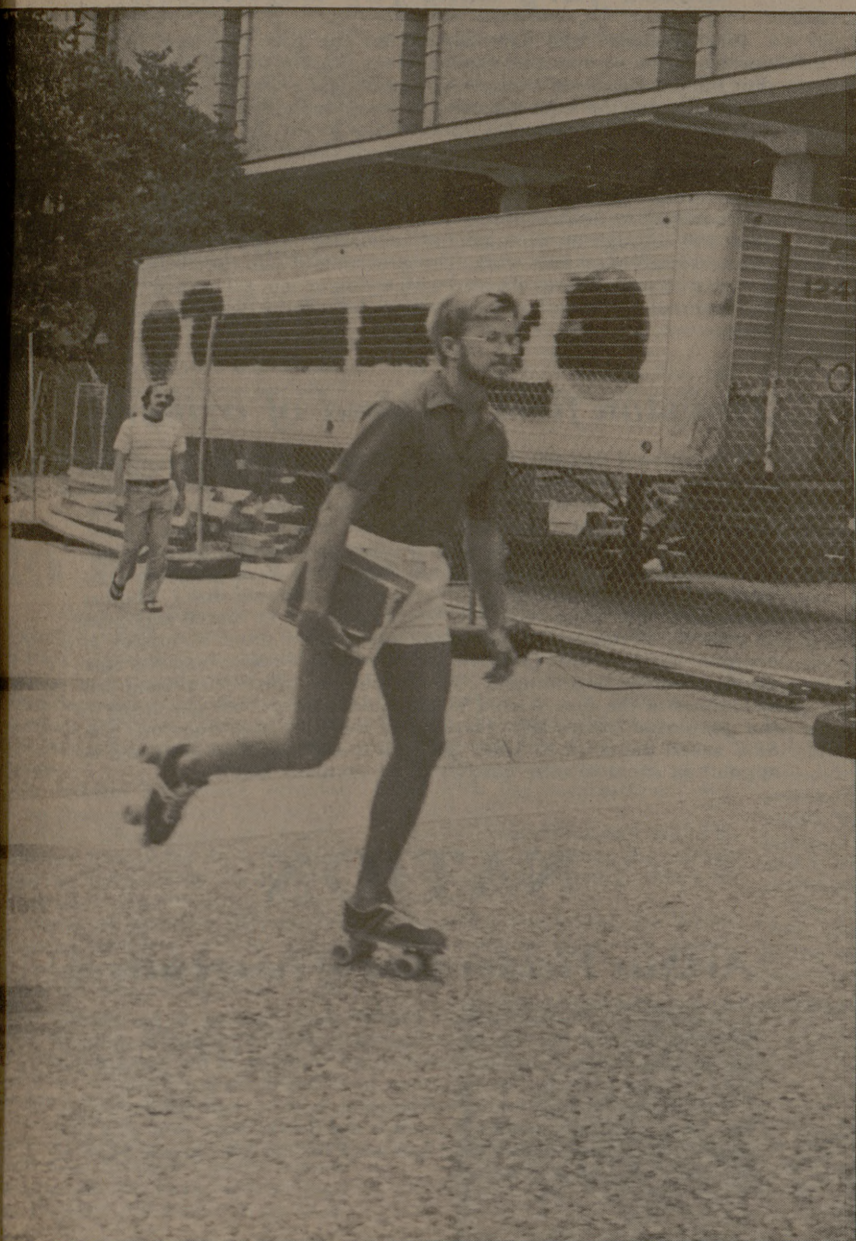
predict landfall. I'm just telling you the possibilities."

Dick Whittington, deputy director of the Texas Department of Water Resources said he believed it "very likely" some of the oil would reach Texas shores.

"They don't even have it shut off yet,"

Whittington said. "By the time it's over with, it's going to be the biggest oil spill in history. We are trying to devise some measures to cope with it."

Whittington said state officials should coordinate with the federal agencies, headed by Coast Guard Cmdr. Joe Sites of Corpus Christi.



Rolling along to class

Reed Grabowski needed an easier, faster way to get to class, and he didn't own a bicycle so he put his old pastime of skating to good use. "It really became practical when they came out recently with these new outdoor roller skates," he said. Grabowski is a senior in Building Construction.

Battalion photo by Clay Cockrill

Consol implements tax relief measures

By ROY BRAGG
Battalion Staff

The A&M Consolidated School District voted Monday night to implement tax relief measures authorized by the last legislative session totaling an estimated \$696,477 beginning with the 1979 tax rolls.

The board increased the old age exemption on the market value of property for homeowners 65 and over to \$20,000. Pre-

viously, the old age exemption for the school district was \$15,000.

Under the new exemption, a home with an original market value of \$40,000 would be considered as having a market value of \$20,000 for taxation purposes. At the 1978 tax rate of \$1.27 per \$100 valuation and at the assessed ratio of 80 percent, taxes on the house would be \$203.20. Under the previous exemptions and the same tax rate and ratio, the house would have a market value of \$25,000 with taxes totaling \$254.

The school board has yet to set the tax rate for this year.

The old age exemption approved Monday by the school board is \$5,000 over what is outlined by H.B. 1060, Superintendent Bruce Anderson said.

H.B. 1060, approved by the legislature during the last session, is called the tax relief amendment.

It provides an old age exemption of \$10,000 on the market value of property for homeowners 65 or over. It also created a \$5,000 homestead exemption for all other homeowners. In addition, the bill creates an open-space land exemption, an optional exemption for agricultural land based on the net value most beneficial to the owner.

The board voted to implement the open-space land exemption this year and to extend the deadline for filing for the exemption to 5 p.m. July 23.

The board took the action on the recommendation of Superintendent Bruce Anderson and his staff following a presentation by Dr. Donald Ney, assistant superintendent for finance for the school district. Ney's report estimated the impact of H.B. 1060 on the revenue available to the district.

H.B. 1060 also sets aside state funds for reimbursing districts for the local revenue lost.

According to Ney's report, the estimated loss in local revenue due to old age, homestead, and open space exemptions totals \$696,477. The maximum reimbursement available to the district through state funds would total \$663,292, leaving a revenue loss of \$33,185.

Researchers hope to find diabetes' relationship to vascular disease

By KEITH TAYLOR
Battalion Staff

Researchers at the Texas A&M University College of Medicine are studying problems diabetics have in microvascular circulation and how vascular complications can be stopped.

Dr. Robert J. Morff, an instructor in the department of medical physiology, said 80 percent of the deaths in diabetic patients result from vascular malfunctions. The malfunctions also cause a higher incidence of blindness in diabetics due to the breakdown of small blood vessels in the retina of the eye.

Vascular disease almost always occurs in diabetic patients, making them more prone to complications such as gangrene.

Dr. Harris Granger, department head, and Morff have been conducting research to determine the relationship between diabetes and vascular disease and why diabetics are more likely to have vascular disease.

"We are trying to determine exactly what changes occur in the vascular system of diabetics, both structural and chemical," Morff said.

The researchers are looking for some reason the vascular disease occurs in diabetic patients. Morff gave an example of hormone production. If they can find a relationship between hormone production, or lack of it, which would cause vascular malfunctions and connect it with diabetes, the research would be successful.

Morff and Granger have studied both rats with natural diabetes or laboratory-induced diabetes.

"We are looking at why it occurs. We have a system so we can look at live tissue in experimental animals," Morff said.

Previous studies have been mainly clinical or structural, he said.

Clinical studies involve mainly finding what drugs are effective in fighting diabetes and its symptoms and structural research involves studying tissue after death, he said. The research at Texas A&M has an advantage over these because the research involves studying live tissue.

Diabetes is a genetically caused disease that causes the pancreas to stop producing insulin. Insulin controls glucose (sugar) levels in the blood.

There are two types of diabetes, adolescent onset and maturity onset. Adolescent onset is more severe because insulin production stops completely. In maturity onset, some insulin producing cells continue to function, he said.

In both types of diabetes, the blood sugar levels can be controlled either by insulin injections or special diets. However controlling the sugar levels does not prevent the vascular malfunctions, he said.

It has been known for 100 years about the changes in diabetic vascular systems, but no one has been able to determine why, Morff said.

"We don't know if it is a direct consequence of blood sugar level. Some researchers feel it is another genetic defect that is linked to the diabetes defect. Others believe one defect stops pancreas production of insulin and causes the vascular disease."

A diabetic can live without developing vascular disease, but Morff said this is uncommon.

"Generally both types of diabetics will develop vascular disease. The severity of the vascular malfunctions is related to the length of time the person has had diabetes."

"Vascular disease appears to be dependent on diet. Japanese diabetics do not have nearly the severity of vascular disease as American diabetics. But we are not actually sure if diet has an effect on the disease. It could be genetics or diet," Morff said.

'Overcrowding isn't the cause'

Increased prison violence due to age, statistician says

United Press International

HOUSTON — A state statistician Tuesday told a federal judge the declining average age of inmates — not more and more overcrowding — has led to increased violence in the Texas prison system.

Dennis Barrick, a Texas Department of Corrections research analyst, disputed evidence submitted by the Justice Department suggesting overcrowding was a major factor in rising discipline problems.

"I haven't found — and I have looked for and tried to find — an association between the number or density of inmates and increased misconduct," Barrick told UPI.

"I'm finding the younger people are explaining it. We're sending more and more young people to prison."

Barrick testified in an inmate lawsuit, now in its sixth month of non-jury trial before U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice, demanding major court-ordered

reforms in the nation's most populous prison system.

Inmates David Ruiz and O.D. Johnson, on behalf of 25,000 prisoners in 17 prisons, charge overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation, poor security, abuse by guards and inmates and bad health care and food violate their rights.

The Justice Department, assisting the inmates' own lawyers, has presented statistics showing that as the Texas prison population doubled between 1969 and 1979, the number of major disciplinary incidents increased 600 percent.

Barrick said Justice Department numbers during the period might be correct, but he challenged their interpretation.

He said his studies suggest that, at the same time the population has increased, the average age of inmates has declined and that younger inmates, not increased densities of them, were more violent.

Barrick said the 40.47 percent increase in the number of inmates younger than 28 during the 5-year period contributed to

increased violence because younger inmates tend to be less receptive to authority.

"Density explained the least amount of variance in (the number) of assaults," Barrick said.

Justice Department lawyer David Vanderhoof said studies by University of Texas researchers showed overcrowding, increased violence, homosexual rape, suicides and health problems.

Assistant Texas Attorney General Richel Rivers said the state has admitted its prisons are overcrowded but denies overcrowding alone constitutes cruel and unusual punishment prohibited by the constitution.

"We've seen no studies that support the thesis that overcrowding causes an unconstitutional level of harm," she said. "We don't think it does."

Lawyers for both sides expect the trial, which started Oct. 2 but was interrupted for three months, to continue at least into September.

Another nature shot

The sun sinks on another semester at Texas A&M, allowing students to reflect on what they have or haven't accomplished during the first summer session. Whatever the outcome, this oak tree on FM 2818 will be here longer after we are. We hope.

Battalion photo by Clay Cockrill

