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Program collects \$106 for Cambodia children

The result of the International Students Association's program on Human Rights Day Monday was a \$106 donation to the Cambodian Children's Relief Fund. The ISA had four speakers talk to students about human rights around the world, including a former president of Cambodia, Cheng Heng. The money was collected from donations made by Texas A&M students, faculty and staff.

Kennedy denies writing Iran letter

United Press International
TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian leaders said Wednesday that Sen. Edward Kennedy offered to meet Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in an effort to resolve the hostage crisis, but a Kennedy aide denied the report as "totally false."
There was disagreement in Tehran, however, on whether the reported offer was made by letter, telegram or through an intermediary.
The controversy over the alleged Kennedy move sharpened as the Iranian judge who claimed responsibility for the assassination of the shah's nephew said the 50 American hostages, now in their 40th day of captivity, will not be sentenced to death even if they are tried as spies.
But Khomeini himself accused the United States of fomenting internal unrest in Iran in an effort to divert attention from the crimes of America.

An official Iran radio broadcast early Wednesday said that in the letter, written by the Massachusetts Democrat Sunday, Kennedy asked to meet Khomeini and praised the ayatollah's accomplishments, saying, "I shall give my blood for your sake."
The radio said Khomeini rejected Kennedy's request for a meeting.
In Washington, Kennedy aide Richard Burke said the letter was a fabrication.
"It's not so," Burke said. "The senator has made no communication whatsoever with the ayatollah and that broadcast is totally false." He said Kennedy "would never say anything like that."
Despite the denial, Iranian leaders insisted there was such a letter.
Sayed Ahmed Khomeini, the Islamic leader's son, said over Radio Iran: "The original letter is with me. But since Mr. Kennedy has seen this published and it has

become bad (for him) this is another matter."

Two weeks ago, Kennedy accused the deposed shah of looting Iran of billions of dollars and presiding over one of the most tyrannical regimes in history. The statement was splashed in Iran's media, which hailed the senator's remarks.

In the holy city of Qom, near Tehran, Sheikh Sadeq Khalkhali, Iran's most controversial revolutionary judge and a close friend of Khomeini, said none of the American hostages will be sentenced to death even if they are convicted as spies.

But the judge, who has personally condemned some 200 to 300 followers of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi since the shah was toppled in January, told newsmen his squads would continue to hunt down the shah and his supporters "until we kill them all."

Three-day protest ended

Fasting Iranians arrested

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Police dragged five Iranian students screaming "Khomeini, Khomeini, Khomeini" through the City Hall lobby to a waiting paddy wagon Wednesday, ending their three-day sit-in in city hall steps.
Angry counter-demonstrators were threatening to kill the students.
Four police officers, saying they were taking the Iranians into "protective custody," surrounded the five fasting students at noon and told them, "come on, you can't stay here any more" after about 20 Americans threatened to rush them and tear up their signs and pictures of the Ayatollah

Khomeini.
Police said the Iranians were taken into protective custody but charges of blocking a passageway were later filed. They were held under \$40 bond each.

City Manager Tom Huebner, terming the Iranians "fools," and the counter-demonstrators "trash," said he ordered the arrests because the situation had reached a point that the four officers assigned to protect the Iranians could no longer control the situation.

The five, some screaming "Imperialism," were rushed into a paddy wagon and taken to the Bexar County Jail.

A motley crowd — including members of such diverse groups as the Ku Klux Klan, Bandidos Motorcycle Gang and Brown Berets — had taunted the Iranians for two days as they read the Koran and prayed on the steps.

The crowd cheered as police hauled them away, then grabbed their signs, Khomeini pictures, blankets and jackets, stomped on them and packed them tightly into a nearby trash can. Some members of the group stood in a tight circle and talked of killing the protesters if they returned.

"The Iranians were fools for sitting out here in the rain," Huebner said moments after the arrests, "and, unfortunately, we have enough trash in town to come over here and make a scene about it."

Huebner said he had made a decision not to assign any more than four policemen to protect the Iranians, protesting the presence of deposed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who arrived at Lackland Air Force Base 10 days ago.

It took 30 policemen standing shoulder to shoulder two deep around the five protesters Tuesday night to protect them from an angry crowd of 200 screaming residents waving American flags and shouting anti-Iranian obscenities.

City Council Tuesday night upheld Huebner's decision last week not to grant any parade permits for demonstrations while 50 Americans are being held hostage in Tehran. At the meeting, several speakers urged the council to "find a way" to halt the sit-in and hunger strike on city hall steps, warning it could lead to violence.

There were indications the protective custody arrests may be the method city officials have chosen to defuse the angry confrontation.

Asked whether the Iranians would be taken into custody again if they resumed the sit-in, City Attorney Jane Macon said, "We'll just have to wait and see. We'll just have to play it by ear."

Fiji offers island refuge for shah to 'live in peace'

United Press International
PACIFIC HARBOR, Fiji — The prime minister of Fiji Wednesday invited the deposed shah of Iran to take refuge on one of his nation's islands.
"The poor man has suffered enough and personally I think the man, whatever wrong he has committed, has been abandoned by everybody except the United States," Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara told newsmen Wednesday.

Mexico, the shah's home in exile since June, has refused to renew his visa but Egypt has offered him asylum and reports said a number of other countries are considering a similar offer.

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi is recuperating at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

"It is my personal belief that we should give the shah the opportunity to live in peace on one of our islands. Even Christ promised relief to a thief alongside him on the cross," said Ratu, prime minister of the South Pacific island nation.
"Any decision on this invitation would have to go to the Cabinet, but it is my personal opinion that the shah has been persecuted enough."

The prime minister was asked where Fiji, which has 106 habitable islands out of the country's 322, gets its oil.

"We receive our oil from Australia and I hope Australia will not suffer as a result of this," he said.

"Fiji is a Christian nation and those of us who profess to be Christians should stand up and be counted."

1,950 to graduate this weekend

About 1,950 graduate and undergraduate students are expected to receive degrees in two ceremonies this weekend in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Commencement exercises will be Friday at 7:10 p.m. for those graduating from the colleges of Architecture, Engineering, Science, and Veterinary Medicine.

The students graduating from the colleges of Agriculture, Business, Education, Geological Science, and Liberal Arts, and Texas A&M University at Galveston will receive degrees Saturday at 9 a.m.

Speakers at the ceremonies will be Harold J. Haynes, chairman of the board of Standard Oil of California, and Michel T.

Halbouty, Texas A&M graduate and petroleum engineer.

Commissioning of officers for the Corps of Cadets will take place Saturday at 1:30 p.m. in G. Rollie White. The commissioning officer will be Rear Admiral Paul C. Gibbons Jr., U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Education and Training.

Worst Columbia quake in 100 years kills more than 120 in coastal area

United Press International
BOGOTA, Colombia — Colombia's deadliest earthquake in more than 100 years devastated the nation's coastal regions, killing more than 120 people and leaving hundreds injured and thousands homeless.

The powerful quake, also felt across the border in Ecuador, rolled through the Pacific Coast jungle before dawn Wednesday and triggered a surge of water that destroyed 70 percent of the fishing village of El Charco.

Civil Defense officials said the quake killed at least 121 people, injured more than 200 and left thousands homeless in villages along the coast. At least 100 others were reported missing in the country's second killer quake in three weeks.

"It seemed as if it would never end," a Quito, Ecuador, resident said. "It was a long earthquake."

The Andean Geophysical Institute in Bogota said the quake registered 7.7 to 8.0 on the open-ended Richter scale. A level of 8.0 would classify it as a "great" earthquake capable of tremendous damage.

Rescue efforts were hampered by blocked roads and scarce airport facilities in the quake zone. The Pan American Highway was blocked when a landslide closed a tunnel between the cities of Pasto and Popayan.

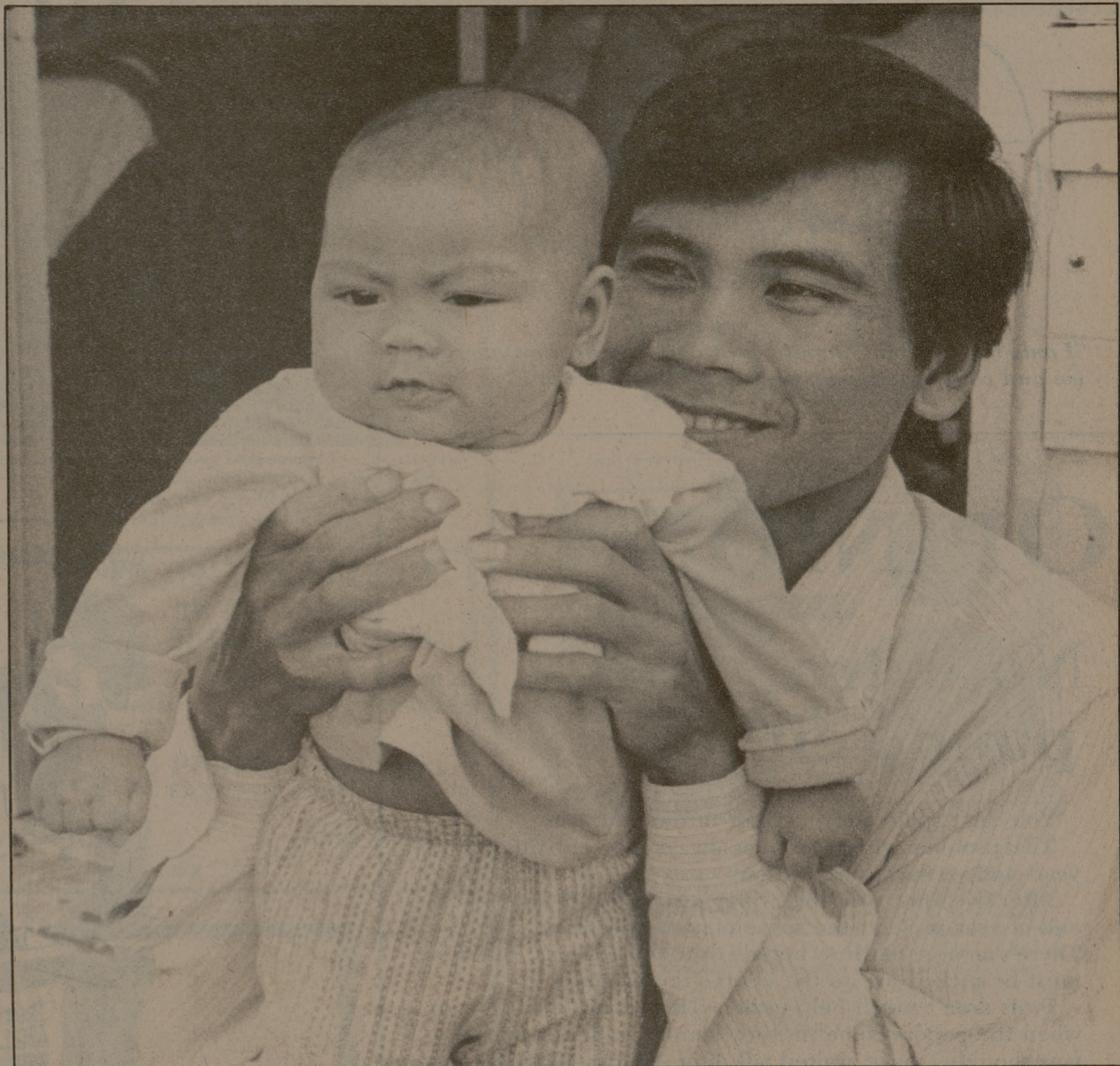
At El Charco, 310 miles southwest of Bogota, 75 bodies were recovered from the wreckage of flimsy houses of sticks, straw and aluminum sheeting.
El Charco (the name means "the puddle"

in Spanish) received a second blow when a tidal surge churned up by the quake sent a nearby river rushing out of its banks, washing away homes and burying victims beneath a mountain of mud. Only 30 percent of the town was left standing.

Thirty deaths were reported at the Pacific Coast port of Tumaco near the Ecuadorian border where survivors fled the city after a tidal wave alert was issued, but it never came.

Other deaths were recorded in a half-dozen villages and settlements in the sparsely populated jungle area of Narino State.

The Rev. Jose Goberna, assistant director of the Andean Geophysical Institute, said the casualty figure was the highest since a temblor leveled the Colombian



The Houston YMCA Welcome Center, a temporary home for these refugees, operates one of several programs across the nation that attempt to house and resettle members of a mass exodus of over 450,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia (now Kampuchea), and Laos. This man does not speak English, so his name could not be obtained.
Battalion photo by Venita McCellon

Houston provides home for refugees from Asia

By VENITA McCELLON
Battalion Reporter

HOUSTON — Their first orientation to the United States begins with a layover in a West Coast airport. From there, a flight brings the new Texans to a temporary home, a place of safety. But they don't see the stereotyped Texas most newcomers see. The Indochinese refugees see only an escape from political harassment and the harsh conditions of refugee camps in other lands.

The Houston YMCA Welcome Center operates one of several programs across the nation that attempt to house and resettle members of a mass exodus of over 450,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, (now Kampuchea) and Laos. The United States, with the help of private programs such as the YMCA's, has accepted 160,000 of these refugees and expects to admit another 25,000 in coming weeks.

The Welcome Center, a small suburban camp of white buildings which is being readied for the winter cold with plastic for the open windows, serves as a second orientation where refugees spend their first 30 days in the United States.

One of these refugees, Dao Truong, is waiting, like the others, for a job, a social security number, and housing. Unlike most of the others, Dao, who served as a chief accountant for the U.S. government in Vietnam, speaks English.

Dao, who spent the past 11 months in a

Malaysian refugee camp, would only say, "They (the Malaysians) were not very friendly to us."

"There are so many pitiful stories," he said. Dao escaped from Vietnam with his six-member family and 278 others on a 63-by-264-foot boat. After three days on the open sea without a place to sit and not enough food or water, they arrived in Malaysia only to be placed in a camp crowded with over 7,000 refugees.

The influx of people such as Dao's family into the United States has caused the Houston Welcome Center to go over its capacity level (50-60 refugees) with a population of about 95 refugees, said Fran Flanagan, community resource coordinator for the YMCA Refugee Service. Sixty of these are children under 18, she said.

"We have them from everywhere," Flanagan said. She said that 48 percent of the people are ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, 27 percent are Vietnamese, 11 percent are Cambodians and the rest are Laotians.

"We've got a cross section of just all kinds of people, so they're anything from farmers and fishermen to radio engineers," she said.

The Welcome service, which not only runs the Houston Center but also resettles refugees, has a staff of 19, 14 of whom are Indochinese.

"(It (the service) is a buffer between the refugee camps in Malaysia and Thailand," said Flanagan. "The idea is to help them become self-sufficient and productive."

The service, which was started by the YMCA in November 1978, has helped more than 600 refugees resettle. All of these are resisters of the Communist governments that have taken over Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam since 1975.

One refugee close to the political problems is Cheng Heng, former president of Cambodia, who now works as a community resources consultant for the YMCA.

Cheng, who served as president under the anti-communist Lon Nol regime, saw the Communist takeover of his country in 1975 firsthand.

"I left 17 days before my country fell to the Communist regime," Cheng said. He said that with food being used as a political weapon many Cambodians are starving to death.

"The people in Cambodia are dying every day," Cheng said. "About 3 million people will die in the next two months if they don't get enough food and medicine."

Cheng's job with the YMCA is to lecture at universities and to civic groups about the need for help in his native country and the

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Discarded trees to be given to poor

By RICHARD OLIVER
Battalion Staff

While some people are partying and celebrating the coming of Christmas, some Aggies are pausing to remember the true meaning of the holiday — giving.

Off-Campus Aggies is collecting Christmas trees from fellow students going home for the holidays to give to families who cannot afford trees.

"I think it's a fantastic idea," said Carlo Corso, community relations chairman for the club. "We're collecting the trees from apartments and dorms to give out to some of the needy families."

The organization is asking anyone who wants to donate trees to deliver them from noon until 4 p.m. Sunday to the parking lot of Culpepper Plaza, under the Plaza sign.

"Most students usually throw their trees in the trash when they leave for the holidays," Corso said. "This way we'll be helping some families who can't have trees."
Corso added some people may want to

deliver the trees to the families personally. Any students who want to do so should call 696-0024 for information.

Corso, an engineering technology major at Texas A&M, said he and his fiancée, Vicki Deck, also an engineering technology major, got the idea last year.

"Vicki called the Bryan Eagle and asked for some names, and they gave her some," he said, "so she used those and it was really great. We gave a tree to a lady last year, and it was beautiful because she said her children had never had a tree before."

Corso said he thought perhaps the idea would be better on a larger scale, so he introduced it to Off-Campus Aggies, and the members decided it would be a good project.

"It might make Christmas a whole lot better for everyone," he said. "I know it'll make mine a lot better. Maybe it'll take some of the commercialization out of Christmas."