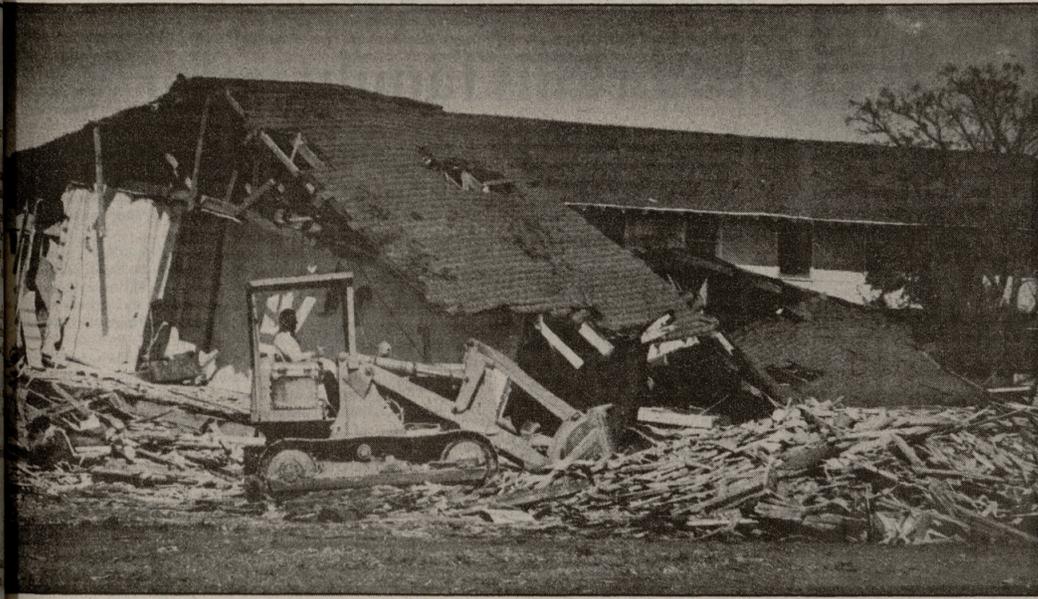


Local



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Low-cost married student housing is gradually being torn down to relieve what University officials say are cosmetic problems and fire hazards. The buildings, moved from Foster

Air Force Base in Victoria 34 years ago, are scheduled to disappear by September 1981.

Housing raze to end in rent raise

Barracks are being demolished

By CINDY GEE  
Battalion Staff  
Chuck Hargis will face two problems in September; the razing of his apartment, and consequently the raising of his rent.

Hargis, an engineering student, lives with his wife, Carole and two teenage children in a four-bedroom, two-bath, two-kitchen apartment for \$550 a month. The apartment is normally divided into two, renting for \$350 a month. Besides the advantages of low rent and plentiful space, the apartment is located across from the Texas A&M University campus. The problem is that people say the apartment is an eyesore, and University officials say it's unsafe. Their ally, the city, says it is one of about 100 apartment buildings that are commonly referred to as "the barracks" or Old College along its campus.

Mrs. Hargis said it doesn't bother her to see the barracks razed. "The Old College View looks like a slum because, \$1,500, and we don't worry about keeping up the Joneses. If we could afford to live somewhere else, we would. But right now we have two children in braces and a young husband in school, so that's where all of our money goes." The Old College View apartment is located off of University Avenue in the married student housing complex, were originally built at Foster Air Force Base in Victoria during World War II. The barracks started out with 58 buildings, eight apartments to a building, but since 1969, they have gradually been razed to make room for newer apartments.

The original plan was for the barracks to be temporary housing. They were re-erected with the idea that they would be up for about three years. But with the demand for housing, they have remained for quite a while — just a few more years — total-making area 34.

It's always been viewed as temporary housing, so the state hasn't wanted to do a whole lot to fix them. "James Vickery, a tenant, said, 'If you had a home, you would have roofed it and fixed the plumbing and maybe even remodeled it after a few years. They've had a really good deal for a long time, and now it's time to tear them down.'"

Fourteen of the barracks remain standing today, with two buildings scheduled to be demolished in November. Ken Nicolas, manager of the married student housing apartments, said when the last family in a building moves out, they will raze the building. The barracks are no longer available for rent to new tenants, and by Sept. 1, 1981, all of the remaining tenants will be out.

Nicolas said the reason for demolishing the buildings is because they're a hazard to health and safety. "They're a tinderbox," he said. "Those buildings are built out of pine and they have dry rot and termites. It's amazing we haven't had any

catch fire yet; we've been real fortunate.

K.W. Melson, maintenance foreman for married student housing, is bulldozing the buildings down himself, and he thinks differently. "They're not dangerous," he said. "They're hard to knock down. They could be repaired and dressed up. It would just take some money. It

*"I'm sentimental because I hate to see old things go, but in a few years this place will be like a rat trap to throw hay in... Sometimes you just have to shoot the horse."*

would be hard to get them in number one shape, but an individual could come in and do it and make it a nice place to live in.

"In my opinion they're not a fire hazard; the University just doesn't think they look nice. That's the whole thing.

Chuck Cargill, director of business services, said: "The demolition of the old buildings and the planning for new ones is of no relation. We spend more money maintaining those buildings than all of the others put together. The sinks, showers and stoves are rusted out.

"Let me put it this way, I wouldn't want one of my children living there. It's like an old car, you can drive it only so long and finally one day it has to go to the junk yard."

Which is exactly where these barracks go after they're torn down. "When they wreck them, it's a pitiful sight," one tenant who is in renewable resources said. "I'm seeing a lot of good lumber going to waste. There are 32-foot ceiling rafters that are hard to buy these days."

Cargill said the University tried just about every alternative before deciding to bulldoze the buildings and haul off the debris themselves. He said they first tried unsuccessfully to get contractors to pay them for the wood, then they tried to get

contractors to tear the buildings down in exchange for the wood, and finally they took bids to see how much it would cost the University to hire someone else to demolish the barracks.

"We had one contractor who came in and tore two buildings down," Cargill said. "When he finished, he said he didn't want anything else to

do with it. It cost him more to tear them down than he got out of it in wood.

The barracks certainly are not the housing answer for everyone, but for many they are a way to financially be able to attend school with a family.

David Rubio brought his family of five with him from Mexico to College Station so that he could get his doctorate in agronomy.

"I was looking for three things in an apartment when I came here," he said. "To be close to the University so I could walk or ride my bike, to be cheap and nice, and to be around an environment where my kids can play safely. Except for the looking of these barracks, I find everything."

Nicolas said residents of Old College View were given notice last September that they would have to be out by this September. He said if they had filled out applications for married student housing when they first found out, they should be able to obtain married student housing by the time their buildings are razed.

Besides, Nicolas said, there are all kinds of accommodations for married students out in the community.

"Off-campus housing is priced at a level where they expect three or four students to share the rent," David Boisenko, another tenant, said. "The typical family that's going to school

just can't afford \$300 or \$400 a month."

Nicolas said: "We build for young married students, not for students with kids. If they want to come to school with their families, they can lease or buy a three or four bedroom house.

"This isn't a giveaway product. Imagine what taxes would be like if the state of Texas paid for people's education.

Hargis said he thinks the University should replace the barracks with some sensible two and three bedroom apartments. A little more up-to-date with some insulation and maybe some central air, he added.

"I'd be all for them replacing these if they'd only replace them with something halfway cheap," Lynn Boisenko said.

Cargill said he felt that it would be two or three years before the University built more apartments. He said funding was the major problem, and they had to build them as they could afford to.

"After the buildings are down, we do plan on grading it and getting out all of the rubble to make it suitable for a playground," Cargill said. "We're getting estimates for tree planting now."

Vickery summed up the feeling of many of the tenants and University officials saying: "I'm sentimental because I hate to see old things go, but in a few years this place will be like a rat trap to throw hay in... Sometimes you just have to shoot the horse."

Campus Names

Texas A&M University senior chemistry major Michael Smith received the \$100 Cosden Prize for the outstanding research paper at the Second Annual American Chemical Society Student Affiliate Research Conference sponsored by the Permian Basin ACS section at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin.

Smith's paper was entitled "Reactions of Tin Anionoids with Primary Alkyl Halides" and dealt with research conducted under the direction of Dr. Martin E. Newcomb, professor of chemistry.

Kristine Novak, also a senior chemistry major at Texas A&M, presented a paper on "A New Method for Azlactone Synthesis," co-authored by Dr. Charles F. Hoyng, assistant professor of chemistry.

Novak is president and Smith vice president of the Undergraduate Chemistry Club at Texas A&M.

David B. Cameron, a doctoral degree candidate in industrial engineering at Texas A&M University, won a \$1,000 second-

place award in the Hartford Loss Prevention Awards Competition, a nationwide workplace safety contest.

Cameron received the award for his suggestion for a method to clean and control contaminated air in industrial exhaust systems. His entry was entitled "Direct Recirculation Ventilation Loss Control Through Effective Engineering."

Cameron is a certified industrial hygienist and safety professional.

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