

Local

Crime Stoppers

\$1,000 for information

By DENISE RICHTER
Battalion Staff

Crime Stoppers, a program geared toward public involvement in the fight against crime, may be established soon in the Brazos Valley.

The program encourages public participation by paying for information leading to the arrest and indictment of persons involved in felony crimes and by re-enacting a "crime of the week" during a television news broadcast, on the radio and in newspaper articles.

The Crime Stoppers program has compiled an impressive set of statistics during its five-year history, said Texas A&M University Police Chief Russ McDonald. More than 6,000 felonies have been solved, 2,071 defendants have been brought to trial, 2,059 convictions have been made (a conviction rate of 99.4 percent) and \$19.5 million worth of property has been recovered, he said.

"Most Crime Stoppers programs have gotten started through the local Chamber of Commerce," McDonald said. "The Brazos County program would have to depend on private donations of money, office space, typewriters and things like that — no city or state money would be used."

McDonald called the Thursday press conference to acquaint representatives of other law enforcement agencies with the program. He said the program could be started in the Brazos Valley when a civic organization, such as the Chamber of Commerce, volunteers to sponsor it.

The program would have a civilian board of directors who would oversee the general operation of the

program and decide how to administer the reward funds.

The county sheriff's office would furnish one criminal deputy to be the project coordinator. The deputy would be a non-voting member of the board and would serve as a liaison between the police departments, the board of directors and the news media.

Initially, the program will deal with unsolved felonies in the areas of homicide, rape, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated assault and arson, McDonald said.

Each week, a specific unsolved crime would be selected as the crime of the week by the board of directors and a \$1,000 cash reward offered for information leading to the arrest and indictment of the criminal.

Anyone contacting the Crime Stoppers office with information is given a code number. If the information leads to the arrest and indictment of the criminal, the board of directors then decides how much to pay the informant.

The informant's code number is broadcast over television, radio and in the newspapers. The informant then contacts the Crime Stoppers office again and is told where he or she will be paid. Complete anonymity is guaranteed, McDonald said.

The Crime Stoppers program was started in Albuquerque, N.M. in 1976. It is now used in more than 90 cities. Texas cities with Crime Stoppers programs include Austin, El Paso, Dallas, Houston, Waco and San Marcos.

Researchers on Gyre find unusual magnetic forces

Scientists aboard the Texas A&M University research ship Gyre, just returning from their search for the Titanic, did not find the sunken oceanliner, but they did uncover scientific evidence that may be just as exciting.

The search has turned up several man-made objects that could be from the ship in an undersea canyon two and a half miles beneath the surface of the Atlantic. Photographs taken at the site must still be analyzed in detail, said expedition leader Mike Harris, but he noted some appear to show large bolts and perhaps even part of a ship's propeller blade.

In addition to the physical debris, researchers said the Texas A&M vessel's sophisticated deep sea magnetometers discovered "significant magnetic anomalies" in the area where the Titanic is believed to have gone down.

Columbia University geophysicist Dr. William Ryan said the peculiar magnetic readings in the area were completely unexpected and would need careful study to explain their presence.

"The readings indicate magnetic objects from the size of watermelons to pieces weighing several hundred tons," Ryan said. "They could be parts of the ship scattered through the canyon or they could be magnetic boulders. Either possibility is exciting because at this point we can't explain how they got there."

Video tape and still photographs of the sea floor proved to be inconclusive in identifying the objects.

Texas adventurer Jack Grimm, who financed the 24-day ocean search for the Titanic which struck an iceberg and sank in 1912, said he has not decided if he will continue the search for the sunken ship.

The Gyre, one of the nation's busiest and most advanced oceanographic research vessels, left Boston almost immediately to resume scientific research in the Atlantic. The ship is operated by Texas A&M's oceanography department.

Malathion found safe

Despite the public uproar in California about the use of the insecticide malathion to control Mediterranean fruit flies, the material has a proven track record of being safe and free of health hazards, says an Agricultural Extension Service entomologist.

"Malathion has been with us a long time — since the early 1950s — and is one of the most commonly used insecticides by farmers, homeowners and gardeners," said Dr. Phil Hamman.

Hamman said he has had many telephone calls since the California controversy from people wanting to know about the safety of malathion.

Tests sponsored by the National Cancer Institute have shown malathion to be both non-carcinogenic (non-cancer causing) and non-mutagenic (not causing genetic changes). According to Dr. Bill Plapp, research toxicologist with the Agricultural Extension Service, malathion is one of the least dangerous insecticides in use.

Hamman said, "Malathion is routinely used by many homeowners and gardeners to control insects and mites on trees, shrubs, houseplants, flowers and vegetables. It is also used to control external parasites on pets."

In addition, he explained that malathion is used

widely to control many different insect pests of crops. For instance, it has been used in large area control programs for boll weevils and grasshoppers in West Texas.


Another major use of malathion in Texas has been for mosquito control programs, the entomologist said. "Malathion is used almost exclusively to rid urban and suburban areas of disease-carrying mosquitos," Hamman said.

"In 1966-67 and again in 1971, vast areas of Texas, including major cities such as Dallas, Houston and Corpus Christi, were aerially sprayed with malathion to control outbreaks of St. Louis encephalitis and Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis, diseases spread by mosquitos."

The entomologist also pointed out that in all of these uses of malathion, there has been no record of problems involving human health.

Of course, Hamman cautions users of malathion as well as other insecticides to follow directions on the product label, avoiding any unnecessary contact with the insecticide, and washing hands after use.


He also suggests scrubbing sprayed fruits or vegetables before cooking or eating.



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