

Student group to sponsor FOIA Day Wednesday

by Hope E. Paasch
Battalion Staff



Access to federal government agencies' records will be more difficult if a Senate bill is passed by Congress, says Jennifer Afflerbach, chairman of Freedom of Information Day activities at Texas A&M.

The Texas A&M chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, is sponsoring FOIA Day on March 10. Signatures will be gathered for a petition against the pending Senate bill, Afflerbach said. A copy of the petition will be sent to President Reagan.

Reagan favors further limitations on the Freedom of In-

formation Act.

The FOIA Act, which was signed by President Johnson in 1966, says records of federal government agencies are presumptively available upon request. Certain exemptions

are specified to protect national security, Congressmen, the President, federal court judges and private corporations, Afflerbach said.

In the last 16 years, the FOIA Act has been used to find out about FBI harassment cases, auto design defects and school districts' compliance with anti-discrimination laws.

Republican Sen. Orrin G. Hatch of Utah proposed a bill that would dilute the impact of the FOIA Act. The bill seeks to increase the fees and to lengthen the amount of time an agency has to provide the requested information. Exemptions for the CIA and the FBI also would be broadened

by passage of the bill.

The FOIA Act gives an agency a maximum of 30 days to comply with a request, while Hatch's bill would allow a year for the same task. This part of the bill is especially important, she said, since the information may be outdated by the end of a year.

"Concern over Hatch's bill should not be limited to journalists," Afflerbach said. "We are just the eyes of the public."

Locally, the mayors of Bryan and College Station, along with Texas A&M President Frank E. Vandiver, have been requested to proclaim March 10 as Freedom of Information Day.

Hispanic group forms political action force

United Press International
CORPUS CHRISTI — Six million Hispanic voters in the United States will make a political action committee just created by the League of United Latin American Citizens a potent political force, the group's president says.

"This is a major development for LULAC," Tony Bonilla said Sunday after the LULAC executive board approved creation of the political action committee.

Traditionally, LULAC has not endorsed political candidates, but Bonilla said that will change.

"We feel it is time the Hispanic community started flexing our muscles and electing people who are sensitive to Hispanic issues," Bonilla said.

During its three-day meeting that concluded Sunday in Dallas, the executive board of the oldest and largest Hispanic organization in the nation also voted to support the Reagan administration policy giving economic aid to the poor and oppressed in Latin American countries. But the directors went on record opposing direct or indirect military intervention in the region.

The board also adopted a resolution supporting holdout pitcher Fernando Valenzuela in his salary negotiations with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Although they threatened to

call for a boycott of Dodger games if the team does not negotiate in good faith with Valenzuela, the LULAC directors condemned as censorship a boycott of RCA products by the Coalition for Better Television.

Failure of local bank causes adjustments in town lifestyles

United Press International

WOODSON — The folding of a small West Texas bank didn't shake the nation's central banking system or trigger a decline on the stock market. The bank's capital assets — \$350,000 — might cover roughly the price of a prize bull.

But for Gora Mae Carpenter, the Woodson State Bank's locked doors means a painful delay in getting her \$115 Social Security check.

For Davy Jones, 24, it means he does not know who will pick up his low-interest \$18,000 trailer mortgage note.

For Woodson School Superintendent Alton Fields, it means he cannot be sure his school's \$37,000 monthly payroll will be met.

"People are already leaving for jobs in Breckenridge and Throckmorton," said Carpenter, who at 90 is the oldest member of the community. Woodson, about 100 miles west of Fort Worth, has a population of 340. Breckenridge and Throckmorton are 20 miles away.

"Without the bank, the town's going to go — wither on the vine," she said.

Sitting in her white clapboard home, Carpenter said she will have to move her Social Security check account to a more distant bank.

Jones, who builds trailer homes for local residents, has no intention of leaving.

"I can't really leave just now," he said.

"But there are a lot of worries. I have an \$18,000 note on my trailer, and I guess I'll have to negotiate with a new bank to get it picked up. Others are a lot more worried than I am."

The small Woodson school numbers 100 students and 12 teachers, grades 1 through 12. The payroll must be met each month.

The state bank commission examiners were closed-mouthed about reasons for the bank's collapse, the first in Texas in three years and fourth in the nation this year — possibly making 1982 a record year for bank failures.

People in this town of white-washed buildings surrounded by fields of dried cotton stalks, mesquite bramble and rusting oil pumps attributed it to too many unsecured loans to friends and relatives of bank owner Tommy Ballard.

Ballard, of Bowie, has been unavailable for comment.

"A bank dies and a town dries up and blows away," said Grafton Wolfe, owner of R & E Dye Supply in nearby Breckenridge. Wolfe grew up on a 120-acre farm near Woodson.

"It happened before in Caddo, Crystal Falls, Necessity, Wayland," he said.

"All those towns had banks in the boom days of the oil rush back in the '20s. When the banks disappeared, so did the schools, and the places stopped growing."

But the tiny bank survived the upheavals of the Great Depression and oil bust-boom cycles.

"It was a spirit of the community to keep that bank afloat," Stephens County Judge Miller Tuttle said.

"Hard times meant people had to try harder, work longer and use their imagination to keep the bank alive." Tuttle is a rancher in his native Woodson.

He recalled a story told by his uncle, Roy Miller, 87, a teller at the Woodson bank in the 1920s.

"One day the Woodson bank ran clean out of cash," Tuttle

said. "I here had been a heavy run of people who wanted their cotton gin checks cashed. The bank tried to keep the whole thing secret to keep from a panic."

"Then in struts this big flashy oil man and demands cash for a \$200 check. Uncle Roy thinks a bit as he walks to the back of the bank. He wheels around and tells this fellow that the bank still has some gold."

"Why that oil man's eyes just lit up. So out walks this fellow with a shiny stack of 20-dollar gold pieces and Uncle Roy walks right behind him and locked the door."

Zana Anderson, 47, a Roby banker, used to own the Woodson bank, chartered in 1907, and agreed it takes something beyond a profit motive to run a community service bank.

The bank was sold for a half million dollars four years ago. Anderson and a partner are now in the process of helping Woodson resident apply for a new bank charter.

"We're telling potential investors that they can expect no return on their money for several years," Anderson said.

"The depositors have been burned once. Will they come back? That's the big question."

Wednesday, officials of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. liquidated the assets of the brick column-adorned building, despite a lawsuit filed by the bank owner earlier in the week to prevent the action.

The bank's 1,000 depositors lined up for cash.

Rex Sullivan, 29, was one of

them. "I have two children and a wife and did all my banking

there," he said. "It's a blow to see this thing go."

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