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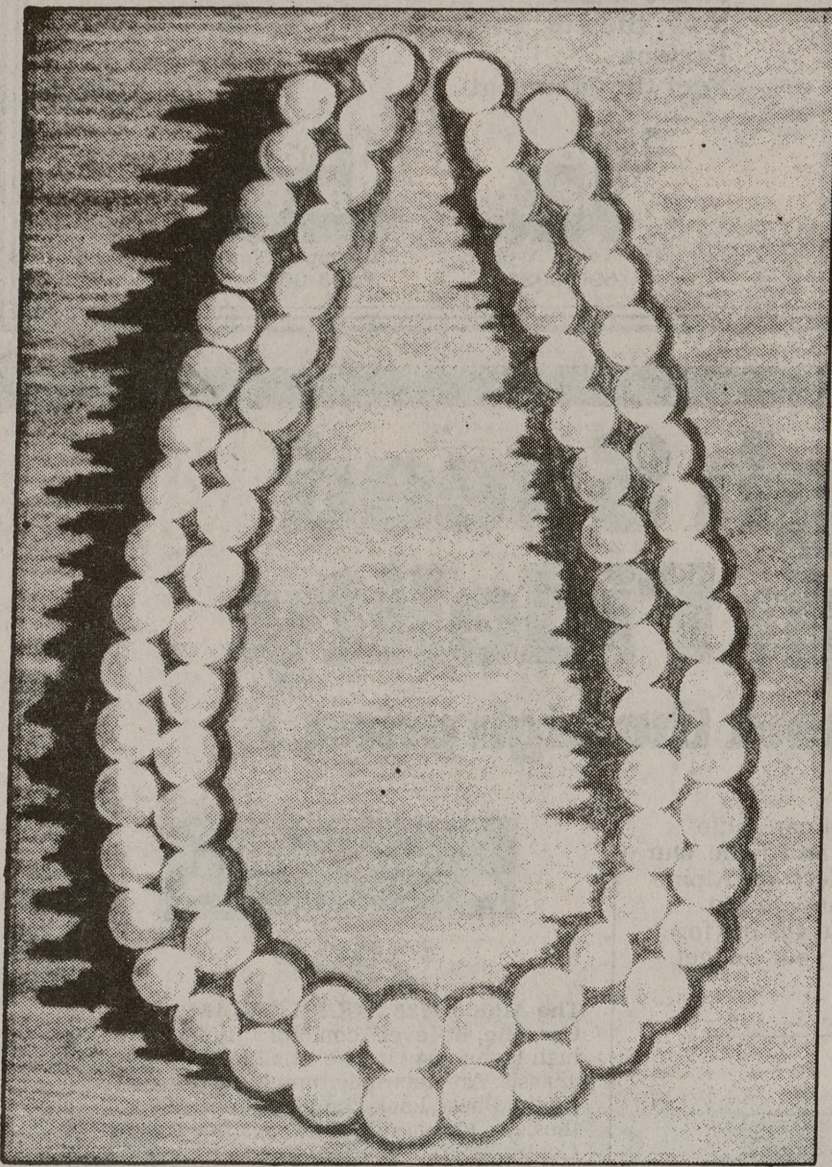


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—state—

Ma Bell asks for fee hike;  
home rate to rise \$4.60

United Press International  
AUSTIN — Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. asked the Public Utility Commission Monday for a record \$471.5 million statewide rate increase that would boost monthly rates for basic residential service by \$4.60.

The rate increase, the sixth sought by Southwestern Bell in the seven years the Public Utility Commission has been regulating rates, is the largest ever sought by a Texas utility, surpassing the \$469.8 million requested by the telephone company last year.

Paul Roth, the company's vice president for revenues and public affairs, said current telephone rates are producing about 9.27 percent return on

Southwestern Bell's investment in Texas, below the 11.79 percent return authorized by the PUC in 1981. The company is asking for a return of 13.09 percent.

The company is not requesting any increase in long distance charges or charges for using coin-operated telephones.

The bulk of the increase — \$213.2 million — would come from the proposed increase in charges for residential service, and another \$90.1 million from increases in basic business service charges.

"We're asking for an increase in basic local residential rates because they are priced far below the cost of providing the service," Roth said.

"Currently, on a statewide av-

erage, the monthly cost of providing local residential service is about twice the basic monthly rate we receive for the service."

The proposal also includes increases of \$38.4 million in service connection charges, \$45.2 million in private line charges, \$41 million in charges for PBX type equipment, \$18 million in additional charges for directory assistance calls, and smaller increases for WATS service and charges for returned checks given by Bell customers.

Roth said the rate proposal would allow customers only three directory assistance calls per month without charge, rather than the current level of 10 calls per month. A charge of 25 cents per call would be levied for each additional call.

"The decrease in direct assistance call allowances created one-time installation charges, and the disconnection charge are examples of our efforts to assure that the customer who benefits from a service, or who causes a cost, for it," Roth said.

Roth said he expects the Public Utility Commission to hold hearings on the rate increase in late August or early September.

Of the \$469.8 million requested by Southwestern last year, the PUC approved \$243.7 million.

The company's appeal of the decision, and a 1980 rate increase are pending in various courts.

Rehabilitation course offered  
to shoplifters; no prosecution

United Press International  
FORT WORTH — As with most additions, the first step in curing a shoplifter is getting him to admit he is a thief, says an instructor in a course offered as an alternative to prosecution by municipal court.

Steve Gay instructs an eight-hour class for shoplifters operated by the National Corrective Training Institute of Austin. The classes, held at Texas Christian University, counsel students who have been charged in Fort Worth Municipal Court. If they take the class, they are not prosecuted.

Gay said most shoplifters have difficulty admitting they are thieves.

"I like to hear them admit they stole it," Gay said. "If they really did it, they will contradict themselves and I'll confront them with their discrepancies. There is no way they can correct their behavior until they own up to it."

One woman in the class who

was caught stealing a tube of toothpaste variously said she had a toothache, a clerk was slow and her daughter was waiting for her.

After getting a person to admit his theft, Gay takes care to rebuild the person's self-esteem.

One young woman said after her arrest for the theft of a doll that her friends abandoned her and she failed to be initiated into a sorority she had hoped to join.

"At first, I felt like I wasn't worth anything," she said after the class. "Now I can look back and see I wasn't such a low-life after all."

About 125 people this year have taken the eight-hour class, patterned after one in Kansas City that processed about 800

people in 1981. Similar programs are offered in several states including Pennsylvania, Georgia and Florida.

The National Coalition to Prevent Shoplifting says that citizens who shoplift usually do it on impulse or because they want to get even with store-high prices, they lack money, they are seeking thrills.

Many acts of shoplifting are isolated cases, a probation officer with the Dallas Municipal Court said.

"These basically are offenders who have done dumb things," Don Babbs said. "We have people on probation who come stealing food, they have people on probation who come stealing things of value."

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Two 'aging' kids reunited in Africa

United Press International  
DALLAS — A boy, 9, suffering from a disease that has aged him at 10 times the normal rate is visiting his 8-year-old South African friend who suffers the same ailment.

Mickey Hays of Hallsville met Fransie Geringer last fall at Disneyland and his mother, Cindy Edwards, said it was the first time her son realized he was not the only sufferer of progeria, a rare aging disease. Mickey began his 17-day visit in South Africa Sunday.

"Fransie is the first child he ever met that looks like him," she said. "Kids would ask him if he was from outer space and things like that. He got to where he didn't want to go anywhere at all."

"He felt like a complete loner until he met Fransie. Now he's got someone with who he can share his experiences and the way he looks and feels. Standing face to face with someone like him was overwhelming."

Since realizing his first dream

to visit Disneyland, Edwards said Mickey set a new goal: visiting Fransie in South Africa.

"He started saving his money to go to South Africa," she said. "He and Fransie wrote to each other and they talk about him almost every day. He really loves him in a special way."

Word of Mickey's hopes to visit South Africa reached African Airline employees in New Jersey couple.

Chuck Johnson, a Pan American employee in New Jersey and his wife, Barbara, a travel agent, with American Airlines employees in Arlington raised the \$7,000 needed to fly Mickey and his mother and three other members to visit Fransie.

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