



Close miss

staff photo by Ronnie Emerson

Burt Bailey, a sophomore engineering technology major from Clear Lake, takes a break between classes to enjoy a game of frisbee.

## Decrease in oil demand may not lower gas prices

**United Press International**  
DALLAS — Because of existing reductions in demand, oil industry experts indicate that reductions in domestic crude prices may not result in a savings for motorists at the pump.

Texaco USA, Phillips Petroleum Co. and Diamond Shamrock Monday announced a \$1 reduction in the price they will pay for a barrel of crude oil. Ideally, the reduction should translate into a 2.5 cents a gallon drop in gasoline prices.

However, industry observers note that declining crude oil prices will hit hardest at the independent producers whose economic interest ends at the wellhead. Diversified companies will experience a loss at one end of their operations that will be offset by a savings at the other, according to experts.

Houston analyst John Ryan, who believes that these price-cuts could spread throughout the industry, said that crude oil prices are still following spot prices down.

According to Ryan, the latest price-cuts will widen the gap between the price paid for domestic oil and the official \$34 benchmark price charged by OPEC. Reports of impending price cuts by OPEC have circulated for several weeks.

The major concern for producers is that falling crude prices will result in an even further decline in oil and gas exploration, which has already dropped nearly 40 percent since 1981.

The windfall profits tax, which obligates major oil companies to pay a 70 percent tax on oil discovered before 1979, will result in only a 30 cent cost per each \$1 decline in prices. Independent producers would lose 50 cents on the same oil because their tax rate is lower.

This creates a situation in which the federal government will share in the decline of oil prices because the windfall profits tax has, in effect, made the government a silent partner in the oil business.

John Lichtblau, president of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation in New York, told the Dallas Times Herald that with state taxes included, as much as 80 percent of the \$1 reduction will be carried by the government in the form of lost taxes.

Another factor that buffers the major oil companies is the savings they will encounter in their refining divisions. For example, a \$1 price slide might cost their producing divisions 50 cents after taxes, but it repre-

sents a \$1 savings to the refining divisions.

Bob Mehall, Diamond Shamrock vice president of crude oil and liquids says that price reductions are beneficial if the selling prices of the products manufactured are sufficient to produce a profit margin. Mehall summarizes the situation by noting that

his firm benefits from the price-reductions because Diamond Shamrock is buying oil rather than producing it.

Mehall says the \$1 drop in crude oil is not substantial enough to affect the profits of the marketing and refining segments of the industry.

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## Artificial legs help bird walk

**United Press International**  
CORPUS CHRISTI — Shaky, shorter, but able to move about his backyard cage, Bonaparte the crane is on his feet — and a new set of specially designed plastic legs.

"He's doing real good," Debbie McCreless, keeper of the Sandhill Crane whose legs were chopped off below the knee by an animal trap earlier this year, said Monday.

Bonaparte has been fitted with several sets of artificial limbs but experienced difficulty walking because the limbs lacked flexibility, said McCreless, who operates a private bird sanctuary at her home.

The bird was fitted with his latest artificial limbs Sunday, raising him to about three-fourths of his natural height.

"They are three inches longer than the last set. We're hoping to gradually add an inch at a time until he reaches his natural height," she said.

The new legs, created by veterinary technician John Karger of San Antonio, are made of flexible plastic tubing with suction cups at the bottom.

"Karger had them about 8 inches high two weeks ago, but that was too much of a big step for Bonaparte, so we cut them down to about 4 inches. With Bonaparte's nubs, which are about 3 inches, he's about 7 inches off the ground," said Karger.

McCreless said she does not know the sex of the gray-and-rust-colored bird, but its red cap, striking orange eyes and regal bearing reminded her of Napoleon.

"He tries so hard to be a good bird," she said. "He tries to walk, and he keeps himself clean. And he's got such a personality."

"This is my first crane," she said. "I didn't know a crane had this much personality. He communicates all the time. He sounds like a cat purring, but louder."

Although at first people thought an alligator might have damaged the bird's legs, but McCreless said she believes it was a coyote trap.

"Whatever shattered his legs was one heck of a force, because I've pulled bone splinters out of his nubs that are an inch long and thin," she said.

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