

Report statistics show state murder rate increasing

by Maureen Carmody

10 in 1972.

The study also revealed that handguns are being used less as murder weapons than knives and other sharp objects.

Dr. Ben Crouch, Texas A&M professor of sociology and criminology, gave some explanations about the sudden change and dramatic increase of the Texas murder rate.

"The murder rate in the state — and even the country — is parallel with sociological and demographic shifts," he said. "Anytime you have rapid social change, you have high rates of violence. When the economy is changing, you will have lots of jobs one year, and then a few years later those jobs have shifted or disappeared."

"Our country has not only gone through economic hardtimes, but economic hardtimes in the major industries such as steel and auto. Many people involved in these industries are well-paid but uneducated and have limited skills. When the industry

shifted, what did they do? They came south. And not only did people come, but a particular age group came," he said.

Crouch said that the 20-29 age group — which he called the "dangerous age group" — was the most likely to murder and to be murdered.

He also said that it is not surprising that there are more murders, proportionally, in large cities.

According to the report, in 1981 18.2 of every 100,000 persons living in cities with a population of 50,000 or more were victims of murder. The rate for rural areas was 11.3, and for small cities it was 8.9.

"There was a disproportionate number of young males that came to the big cities such as Houston and Dallas and San Antonio," Crouch said.

He said that with that many people in search of work, aggressions naturally run high.

In 1976, 67 percent of all murder victims knew the offend-

er, but by 1981 the percentage had fallen to 58.1 percent.

Although crime percentages changed, figures for punishment remained fairly stable. Life sentences declined almost 5 percent, while death sentences remained the same at 2 percent. In 1976, 61.1 percent of convicted murderers were sent to prison. This climbed slightly in 1981 to 65.5 percent.

The top 10 cities in the number of murders has also remained fairly consistent. The top five were Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Fort Worth.

Local statistics — given by Detective Gene Knowles of the Bryan Police Department — don't appear to be as bleak, but there has been a noticeable increase in the past few years. In 1982 there were eight murders, in 1981, nine; in 1980, five; in 1979, five and in previous years — except for 1974 with seven murders and 1972 with six — there were four or less.

20 to compete tonight for Miss A&M title

by Melissa Adair

The winner of the 1983-1984 Miss Texas A&M title will be announced at the fourth annual Miss Texas A&M University Scholarship pageant at 7 tonight at Rudder Auditorium.

Twenty contestants will be judged on talent performances and in swimsuit and evening gown competitions tonight.

They also will be judged on personal interviews conducted this morning.

The judging panel will consist of three Miss Texas Pageant judges and two local judges.

Recruiting and entries coordinator Connie Gillespie said

the pageant is not a beauty contest. Rather, it concentrates on talent and intellect. Judging criteria will be 50 percent talent, 30 percent interviews, and 20 percent appearance.

Included in the pageant program will be a gymnastics performance by the current Miss Texas A&M Gina Geiger and a banjo performance by Tom Joseph, head yell leader.

Joseph also will be the Master of Ceremonies. Former Miss Texas and Miss Texas A&M Sheri Ryman will be Mistress of Ceremonies.

A singing performance will be given by former Miss New Mexico Susan Spartz, who will be accompanied by the Aggieland Orchestra. The Ross Volunteers

also will be at the pageant.

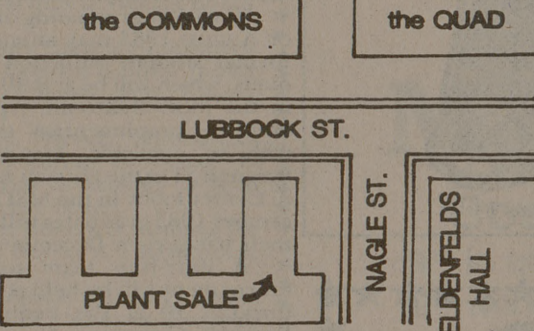
The winner of the pageant will receive a \$1,000 scholarship, a \$1,000 wardrobe, the use of a luxury car, the official Miss

Texas A&M crown and a trophy. She also will receive the first Miss Texas A&M 50 diamond pendant valued at over \$3,000 to wear throughout her reign.

The winner of the pageant will represent Texas A&M July 9 in Fort Worth at the Miss Texas Pageant.

Tickets for the pageant are available at the MSC Box Office. Student tickets are \$3.50 and non-student tickets are \$6.50.

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