

Prison alternatives sought

United Press International
AUSTIN — The solution to Texas' prison overcrowding problem is to stop building "monuments to crime" and funnel more money into alternative programs to keep criminals from behind bars, lawmakers told a House committee.

tensive probation, halfway houses and restitution centers will divert enough criminals from prisons to stop the growth in state prisons.

Texas is under a federal court order to reduce prison population or increase prison size.

The population of the Texas Department of Corrections is expected to grow to 40,000 by the end of 1983 with about 4,000 inmates still housed in tents.

Rep. Jim Rudd, D-Brownfield, said the current growth rate of 300 to 500 prisoners a month could be eliminated by better use of alternatives.

"At the rate we're going, we do not see an end to the population boom at TDC," Rudd said.

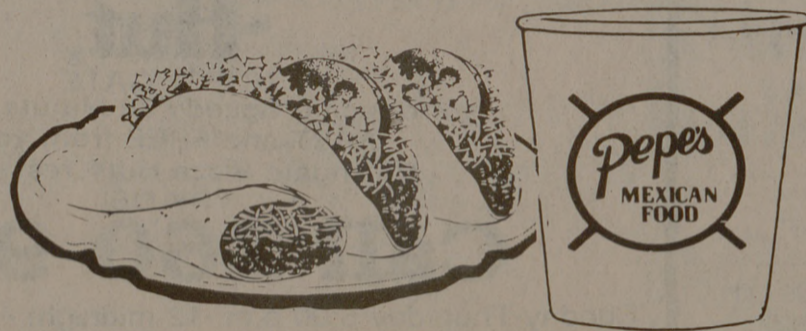
Specifically, Rudd urged that about \$185 million be transferred from TDC's proposed \$800 million biennial budget to the

probation and parole departments for use in beefing up such existing programs as intensive probation, where criminals are closely scrutinized by probation officers.

The money also could be used to start new diversion programs like restitution centers, where criminals must work to pay room and board, restitution to their victims and support for their own families, he said.

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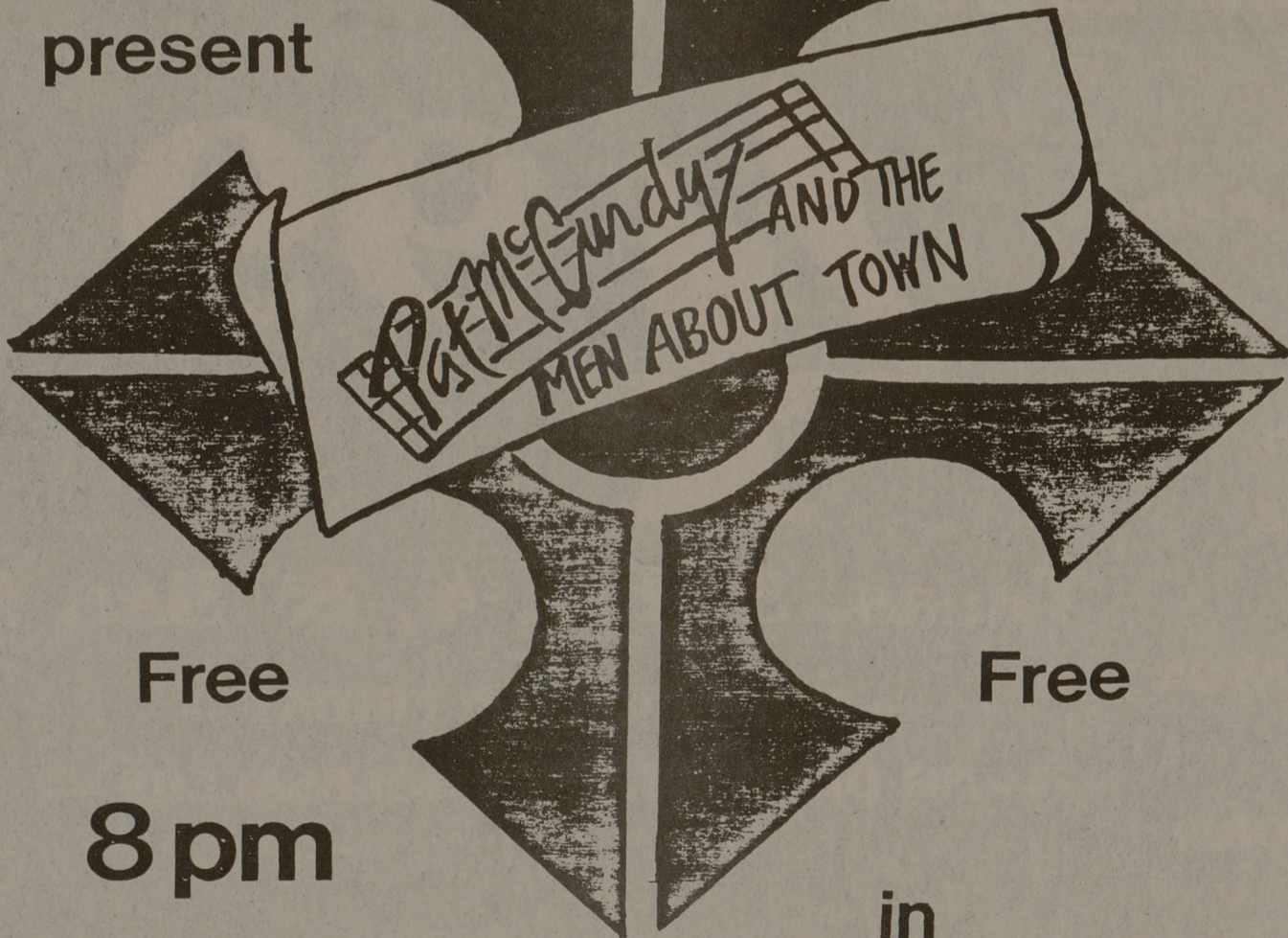
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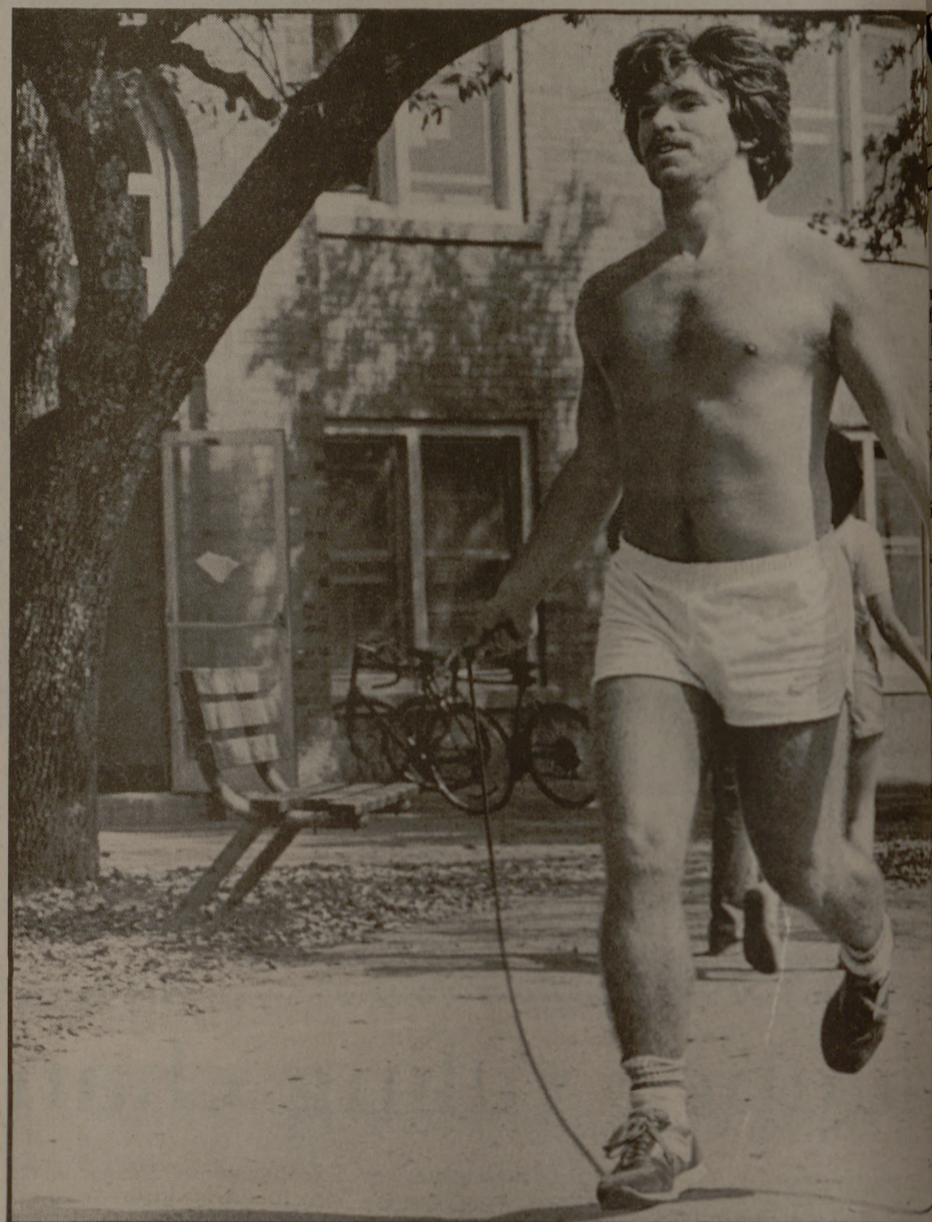
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Exercising and good weather seem to go together. Mitch Dudek, a junior industrial engineering major from

Sidney, Australia, keeps in shape running and jumping rope at the same time.

Another tent city checked for safety

United Press International
HOUSTON — Montgomery County officials Tuesday planned to return to the site of a newly opened campsite for the unemployed to look for possible fire safety violations — the same problem which forced the closing of the controversial Tent City, USA.

Fundamentalist preacher Ray Meyer, disillusioned by the aimlessness of Tent City residents who recently were evicted from a state roadside park because of fire hazards posed by ramshackle tents, recently opened a makeshift camp for the jobless on 2.8 acres of private land in Montgomery County, 35 miles northeast of Houston.

Wary officials paid a visit to the campsite Feb. 22 to point out possible fire safety violations and promised to return Tuesday to further specify hazards that must be corrected and rules that must be obeyed, an organizer said.

"The fire officials showed up and laid down certain things that must be done," Jobe Matusow, who is running the camp with Meyer, said. "We had to remove some wood stacked up, and there was an open pit fire near the tents that they wanted moved back."

"There were about six people who came out, all wearing guns. We told them to tell us what the (fire) code is and what to comply with. We'll comply with the law, but let's do it in a dignified way," he said.

Matusow, of Tucson, Ariz., and the leader of a 14-member group which calls itself American Refugees in America, is helping Meyer build huts and latrines at the camp.

Meyer, who is unemployed and lives in a small frame house overlooking the wooded land, said about 45 people already live at the camp. However, none came from Tent City.

"I exposed Tent City," Meyer said. "I said those people were carrying off the food handouts and selling it for booze. I tried to help those people but it was a disillusioning experience."

With a Bible protruding from

his pocket and a collection beeper attached to his belt, Meyer said he leased the plot on FM 1495 to attract needy people who agree at building permanent at odd jobs, and who also strict rules of conduct.

"We're not establishing a 'religious community,'" Meyer said. "We're giving a secure place to land. We will help any way we can get them on their feet."

However, he said students of the camp have members of Meyer's and signed a "forestry tract giving all personal items to the group."

Meyer said money to camp comes from donations work that members do.

He said as many as 20 can squeeze onto the plot had two permanent huts when he leased it for a month in November. There are four additional huts and a scattering of trailers.

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