



staff photo by Eric Evan Lee

Dig 'em

Mark Lentz, a Texas A&M physical basement of Zachry Engineering plant employee, digs up a rusted pipe Wednesday that caused the

Mother trying to reclaim custody after father's death

United Press International
AUSTIN — The Texas Supreme Court Wednesday agreed to intervene in a custody case where the natural mother is attempting to regain custody of two children she relinquished to their adoptive father, who later died.

The high court set a hearing in a complaint filed by Gloria Greene of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Gloria Greene is seeking cus-

tody of her son, 14, and a daughter, 13, who are living in Porter with Dorothy Greene, the widow of her former husband.

According to court records, Gloria Greene's ex-husband, Cecil Tom Greene, adopted the children in 1974. When the couple divorced in 1978, the courts awarded custody to Cecil Tom Greene.

Cecil Tom Greene later remarried, but was killed in a job-related accident in July 1982.

In seeking to regain custody of her children, Gloria Greene said Dorothy Greene failed to notify her of her ex-husband's death. She said his death nullified the custody's aspect of the 1978 divorce decree.

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Average home prices up

New house sales decline

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Sales of new houses fell 4 percent in April, raising fears among builders that their construction may already be running ahead of demand.

The Commerce Department said Tuesday that the annual rate of sales slipped to 573,000 units a year, the third decline in six months.

But while supply began to outrun demand, the price kept going up. The average cost of a new house hit a record \$89,200, the Commerce department said.

Since housing has been the pace car of the recovery, any slow down can raise fears that interest rates are still too high to allow economic improvements to continue.

Earlier, the government issued a somewhat reassuring report that the sensitive leading

indicators continued to deliver a strong recovery signal, a 1.1 percent gain in April.

Although the weakest reading of the year for the composite index, the April report still seemed to suggest there would be no relapse any time soon like that which aborted an early 1982 recovery.

"Unless interest rates decline further, this housing recovery faces the possibility of reaching a plateau and leveling off," developer Harry Pryde said, speaking as president of the National Association of Home Builders.

"The marketplace has already absorbed a good portion of the pent-up demand left over from the recession," he said.

Even with the decline in sales, under way since January's peak rate of 511,000 units, April was still 67.5 percent ahead of a year

earlier in sales and, for the sixth consecutive month, above the half-million mark.

An earlier report showed April's rate of new housing construction starts was a healthy 1,490,000 units a year despite an 8.4 percent decline from March.

Michael Sumichrast, chief economist of the home builders association, said sales have slipped below a necessary ratio to starts established over the past 20 years.

"Sales are not keeping up with the pace of starts," he said. If the April deterioration in the starts-to-sales ratio keeps up the rest of the year, builders could end up with 75,000 additional new houses on the market unsold, he said.

"The (sales) number is very strong but not as strong as I hoped," he said.

In April there were an estimated 268,000 houses on the market, 5.7 months of supply and the biggest backlog since December.

The median price of a new house, less volatile than the average because it excludes the extremes in price, reached a record \$74,900 in April.

Stock market investors, many of whom apparently spent their holiday weekend worrying about interest rates, sent prices plunging on Wall Street Tuesday.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed below 1,200 for the first time since May 20, dropping 16.16 to 1,199.98 in generally lackluster trading.

Milk plan open to public

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The Agriculture Department is seeking public comment on a proposal to discourage the overproduction of milk and to cut the cost of the government's multibillion-dollar dairy price support program.

The proposal, outlined Tuesday, calls for doubling the existing fees on milk production and holding the dairy price support rate at its current level for another year.

In a printed statement, Agriculture Secretary John Block

said the plan is intended to slow the increase in milk production and reduce government dairy stockpiles, which now hold \$3 billion worth of surplus dairy products.

The plan also should reduce taxpayer costs of the price support program, which totaled \$2.2 billion last year, Block said.

Under the proposal, milk production fees would be increased to \$1 for each 100 pounds of milk placed on the market, beginning Aug. 1. Producers who reduced their marketings would receive refunds of

50 cents for each 100 pounds of milk.

Supporters say the fees will penalize farmers who overproduce, as well as help finance the price support program. But critics have warned that the plan could backfire.

The new proposal also would hold the dairy price support rate at its current level of \$13.10 for each 100 pounds of milk. The support price — the sum the government agrees to pay for surplus milk — virtually guarantees that price as the minimum

to be paid to farmers.

The proposal, outlined in a law passed by Congress last year, comes one week after the House Agriculture Committee approved compromise legislation prescribing different methods to reduce dairy production.

The deadline for public comments on the department's new proposal is June 30. The proposal could be scrapped entirely if Congress approves an alternate plan and President Reagan signs the measure into law.

Corporation plans new \$400 million complex

United Press International
DALLAS — Southland Corporation's planned high rise development spanning North Central Expressway is described by the corporation chairman as "a dramatic gateway into downtown Dallas."

The actual gateway and centerpiece of the \$400 million project will be twin 50-story towers connected by an enclosed walkway that carry pedestrians over the busy expressway.

Four other buildings, nine stories each, will be built to form

a 21-acre quadrangle flanking the freeway just northeast of downtown Dallas.

One of the towers will be Southland's world headquarters, Chairman John P. Thompson said Tuesday at a news conference.

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