

Gardener helps retarded



Nellie Pittman works outside Francis Hall.

by Stephanie Marshall
Battalion Reporter

Growing up on a farm gave Nellie Pittman a green thumb and knowledge of fundamental plant care, which she now passes on to the mentally retarded.

"Teaching the mentally handicapped is like teaching children; they must be loved," Pittman says.

Pittman, 54, is a gardener with the Texas A&M Grounds Maintenance Department.

Pittman's interest in the outdoors and horticulture began while on a farm outside of Caldwell in Burleson County.

"I was one of six children, so I had to do my share of the work," she said. "That's how I became interested in growing things."

Pittman decided that she wanted to put some of her knowledge to work. Having raised six children, Pittman knows how.

In 1975, Pittman, without any training, began working as a teacher's aide for the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. Within eight months she had advanced to horticulture

supervisor. As horticulture supervisor she not only grew plants, but also instructed the mentally retarded on plant care.

"The first thing you have to do is to gain their love and trust and get them to pay attention to you," Pittman says. "You have to treat them like children and give them the same love back. Once I did that, I could get them to do things even the director couldn't do."

Pittman worked with the TDMHMR until 1980.

Now, Pittman is continuing her career in horticulture at Texas A&M. Pittman began working as a gardener at the University in 1982. She is assigned the north plaza mall area on campus which she is to keep clean and looking nice.

"I have always loved the outdoors," Pittman said, "and that's why I like this job."

She says she came to Texas A&M because she felt closed in while working at the TDMHMR.

Houston Post execs host possible buyers

United Press International
HOUSTON — Executives and editors of the Houston Post, which is for sale, met with officials of the Washington Post and Toronto Sun the past two days, managing editor Kuyk Logan said Thursday.

Representatives of the Sun visited the Houston Post offices Thursday, and Washington Post publisher Donald Graham was at the paper all day Wednesday.

"As far as I know, there will be somebody else tomorrow," Logan said.

He said Graham asked a lot of questions and talked to advertising people and circulation people.

Washington Post Co. spokesman Chip Knight declined comment on the meetings.

It has been three months since The Houston Post was offered for sale. The firm of

Lehman Brothers, Kuhn, Loeb Inc. is handling negotiations.

Financial analysts have said The Houston Post, the second-largest newspaper in the city, might bring \$225 million. That would easily make it the richest newspaper sale in this country.

At the time of the sale announcement in July, the Post's parent company said tax considerations and changing interest of shareholders led to the decision.

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Hispanics may fail, dean says

United Press International
EL PASO — Officials at the University of Texas at El Paso fear a state law requiring prospective education majors to pass a standardized test will reduce the number of Hispanics studying to become teachers.

Large numbers of blacks and Hispanics failed similar tests given in Florida and California, and minorities claimed the tests were biased against them, said Dean William Dunlap of the UT El Paso College of Education.

Hispanics make 51 percent of UT El Paso's 1,300 College of Education students.

Dunlap said the Education Testing Service, a nationwide company that has written the test and will administer it, has made efforts to prevent bias against minorities but "chances are minorities may not do as well."

The first statewide test will be administered March 3. Any college student who has not completed 60 hours of course work by May 1 and who wants to enter a college of education is required to take the test.

The test consists of three parts: reading, writing and math. Students will have to pass all three parts to become education majors, and will have three chances to pass.

Opponents of the test argue that wording of some of the

questions would be clear to middle-class students, but may sound strange to Hispanics from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds.

Dunlap predicts a decrease in enrollment in the College of Education at UT El Paso as a result of the test's cultural bias.

In order to offset the anticipated decrease in number of students, the school has designed a graduate program in special education to add graduate students to replace those people who will fail the test, officials said.



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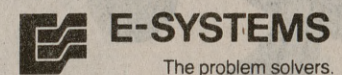
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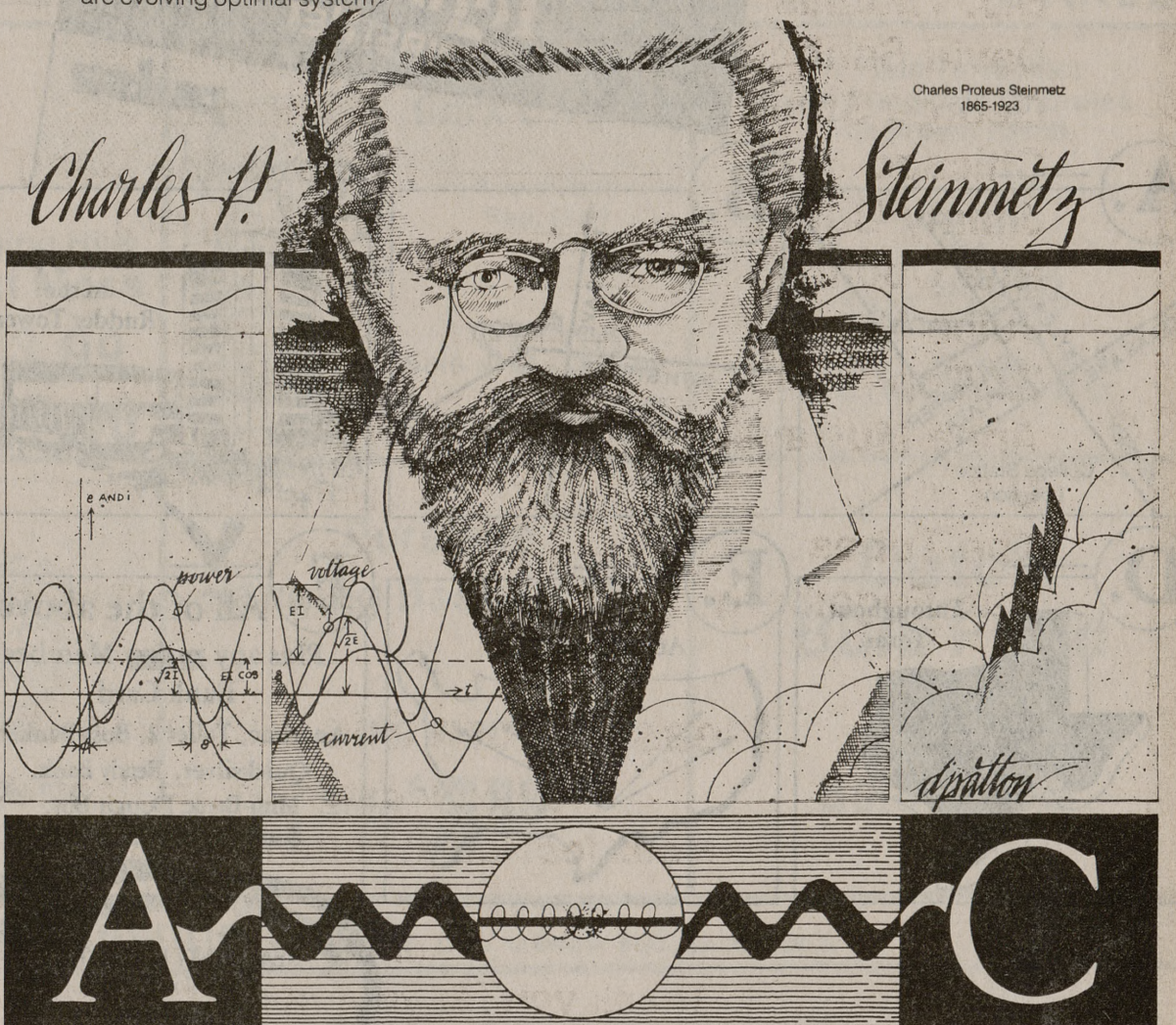
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