

The 'truth' about Chem 101

# O'Conner to tell his side

by Pat Allen

**Battalion Reporter**  
 "There's been a lot of stuff the dean and department head have said in the newspapers that are flat out lies," says Dr. Rod O'Conner, who was formerly head of the First Year Chemistry Program at Texas A&M.  
 O'Conner says he will tell the truth about the reasons for the reconstruction of the chemistry program at 8:30 tonight in 302 Rudder. The talk is being sponsored by Academic Affairs and is the first time O'Conner has spoken publicly about the changes.  
 O'Conner came to Texas A&M in 1973. He said he was hired with a written term of appointment that gave him a free hand in running the program.  
 "I don't know how binding that is legally, but it sure should have been ethically," O'Conner said.  
 O'Conner said the department head told him the chemistry program wasn't de-

manding enough and that students should be forced to attend the section they were registered in. Other faculty members in the chemistry department were angry because they had very low attendance for their lectures and O'Conner's lectures were always standing room only.  
 "They wanted to lower the grades, mainly the A's," O'Conner said. "That's a very easy thing to do. All you have to do is cut out office hours, try to get as many faculty as possible that are new to the program and don't know how to approach it, and write exam questions as ambiguous and poorly as you can. It doesn't take a lot of skill to do that."  
 O'Conner had three choices. He could make the changes the department asked him to make: a more demanding class which would bring grades down and force students to attend their assigned section. He could ignore the requests and continue running the program with the possibility of being fired and losing his tenure on

the grounds of insubordination. He could resign as director.  
 He resigned as director and is now on a leave of absence.  
 "I thought that my resignation as director would generate someone in that administrative structure to say this must be more serious than we thought it was," O'Conner said. "I appealed to the dean and he told me I was right and this thing shouldn't have happened but he had to back the department head. My son talked directly to Bum Bright and Bright told him that it was a simple matter of challenging the chain of command and that they would not tolerate a challenge to the chain of command."  
 The University has some documents that show the performances of students who have been involved in the chemistry program but O'Conner said they won't release them publicly.  
 "Why is the University keeping those documents secret?" O'Conner said. "If they've got nothing to hide

and they have clean hands and they claim I've lied about it, then let them bring it out in public and let everybody read it."  
 O'Conner has seen a copy of one of this year's exams and he feels it was poorly written. He said he heard this year's grades were considerably worse than last year and he heard that there is little office hour help.  
 "I've deliberately avoided trying to find things out because the situation got me so emotionally upset that I got physically ill last spring with high blood pressure," O'Conner said. "I'd have nightmares about the University and wake up with my heart beating 99 mph."  
 He doesn't come around campus anymore. This year was the first year he could have arm chair seats for the football games and he gave away his tickets for every game.

# A&M to house election data collection system

by David Manning

**Battalion Reporter**  
 A Texas A&M historian says Texas will soon benefit from a new computerized data-collecting system that will enable social scientists to use historical and contemporary Texas election records.  
 Dr. Dale Baum, professor of history, said a collection known as the Texas Data Archives will be used by scholars, graduate students and political parties to study election returns, voter trends and voter turnout.  
 Baum said the archives will store all Texas election returns from as far back as 1846.  
 The system is designed to put all election returns into a computer so it can be used for research in the future, Baum said.  
 Social scientists will be able to study the extent to which Texans crossed party lines in the past so that prediction trends can be established for future elections, he said.  
 "If you're going to study election returns, you have to have statistics from previous years to

formulate your data," he said.  
 Historically, Texas has been one of the worst states when it comes to keeping results from past election returns, he said.  
 Many Texas counties have never recorded vote totals and others have lost them, Baum said.  
 Mark Stubbs, a graduate assistant, said information from past

Texas elections can be useful to political parties who are targeting a certain area of the state for future elections.  
 Stubbs and four other graduate students are working on microfilming past Texas secretary of state reports and documents from all election returns since 1846.

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# Explosion

## Two killed in New York fireworks explosion

**United Press International**  
 BELLPORT, N.Y. — A series of explosions leveled a fireworks display Saturday in a burst of jets and a mushroom cloud, killing two employees and heavily damaging 20 nearby homes. Other workers were missing.

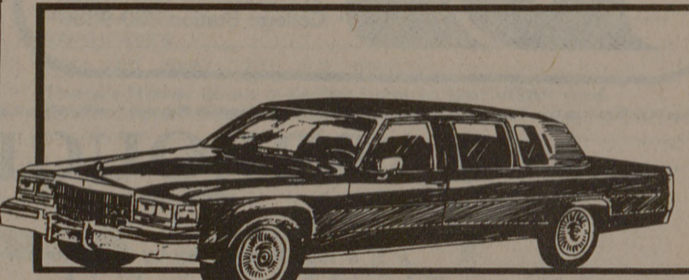
Miller. He said none required hospitalization.  
 The Felix Grucci fireworks display complex, owned by Felix Grucci and his sons, Jim and Peter, is well-known for its pyrotechnic displays, including the extravaganza organized for the Brooklyn Bridge Centennial in May.  
 The force of at least three blasts "heavily damaged" up to 20 homes and blew out windows for blocks around the site, police

and residents said.  
 "It was almost like a bomb going off down the road. I could feel it," said Bob Baron, who lives three miles from the devastated factory.  
 Police evacuated residents in an approximate quarter-mile area surrounding the factory.  
 Suffolk County spokesman Sgt. Joe Reid said two people were killed by the blast and four others were missing. Rescue crews said among the missing

was Jim Grucci Jr., the young son of owner Jim Grucci.  
 All were inside the complex, which includes several warehouse sheds inside a fenced-in area, police said.  
 Officials said the explosion occurred while employees were putting together a display to be used for a Saturday night event marking the beginning of the Christmas season in nearby Patchogue.  
 The first blast occurred 11:10

a.m. Seconds later, another blast shook homes surrounding the site. Witnesses reported hearing a third blast at 11:30 a.m.  
 "It was just a big big explosion," said Jim Scordamaglia, 29, who was visiting friends about a mile away. "My brother was outside and he said he saw all these sparks go up. Then the whole house shook."

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# Microelectronics

**continued from page 1**  
 Carol Bennett, economist with Texas Commerce Bancshares, said the MCC could produce 100 new electronic service supply companies within five years, creating an additional 4,000 jobs with another 4,000 created indirectly.  
 She also said as many as 2,000 manufacturing jobs would be created in Austin and in Antonio within the next three to seven years.  
 But there is a dark cloud that has been hanging over the program since its inception — the fed-

eral government currently is investigating possible anti-trust violations the corporation would commit.  
 Porter said disallowal of the MCC would be comparable to the breakup of the AT&T monopoly. He said by so doing, the federal government severely cut back the most successful American research laboratory in history — Bell Labs.  
 He said that work is continuing between the MCC and the Federal Trade Commission. He also said that there are "apparent reasons for hope that it'll be free of any anti-trust

problems." No ruling, however, has been made either for or against the center.  
 Last March, 57 bids were made to get the MCC located in cities across the nation. Austin, San Antonio and Dallas were the three Texas cities that bid on it.  
 Porter said that if the Texas A&M research park had been further along in its development, College Station possibly would have bid on the center.  
 In May, the number of prospective recipients was narrowed to four; Austin, Atlanta, San Diego and Raleigh-Durham, N.C.

Gov. Mark White, along with Texas A&M System Chancellor Arthur Hansen and the University of Texas System Chancellor E. Don Walker, attended the meeting of the final four in Chicago in mid-May to give a presentation for the Austin site.  
 Porter served as technical monitor in preparing the final Texas presentation.  
 Dr. Jane Armstrong, assistant director of programs with the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, was asked to document the strengths of the Texas A&M System in a package that the MCC would be interested in.

The package requirements also called for her to correlate the Texas A&M program with the overall Texas program.  
 She continues to have liaison with the Austin group and now is coordinating the agenda for Pinkston's visit.

# Death toll passes 200

**United Press International**  
 The Thanksgiving holiday death toll Saturday climbed past 200, including five Japanese tourists who died in a two-car crash in Arizona and a teenage Indiana girl killed in what authorities described as a joyride.  
 The National Safety Council estimated between 400 and 500 people would die and between 17,000 and 22,000 would be injured in traffic accidents nationwide during the Thanksgiving weekend, which began at 6 p.m. local time Wednesday and ends at midnight Sunday.  
 Last year, 433 people were killed while traveling during the Thanksgiving weekend.  
 A United Press International count Saturday showed 228 people died in traffic accidents.

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