

Capitol statue to be inspected

United Press International
 AUSTIN — A specialist will inspect the 16-foot Goddess of Liberty statue atop the Texas State Capitol this week to recommend how the state should repair serious cracks in the 96-year-old cast zinc statue.

Texas Historical Commission architect Stan Graves said Tuesday the statue will be inspected Friday by Patrick Rice, a conservator from the Washington University Sculpture Conservation Laboratory in St. Louis.

Workers who were cleaning and painting the Capitol dome last fall discovered serious cracks that threaten the structural integrity of the statue.

Graves said the cracks are in the back, arms, hand and sword of the statue, although other areas of its surface are also badly deteriorated. The cracks apparently were caused by freezing water and lightning.

It is uncertain whether the statue will have to be removed to be repaired.

"There's a possibility it may have to be taken down to be repaired or it might be repaired in place," said Graves. "He (Rice) is going to check under the base of the dome where it is attached and he may well go on the outside of the dome with safety ropes to inspect the exterior."

Also, a helicopter may be used to photograph the statue, he said.

In addition to the cracks, workmen also found insect nests inside the statue, which was cast

in 1888 in the basement of the Capitol by J.C. McFarland.

The grim-faced statue, holding a star in one hand and a sword in the other, was hoisted atop the Capitol dome on Feb. 26, 1888. The prominent five-pointed star held aloft in the left hand symbolizes Texas' image as the Lone Star state.

Details of how the statue was placed on its 300-foot perch are sketchy, but photographs have

led historians to believe raised by a pair of cranes. There are no records indicating how much the statue weighed although Graves said he will try to make that determination during his inspection.

Graves said after the inspection this week, a report submitted to the commission outlining proposals for repair and stabilization of the statue.

The state is being charged \$1,500 for the inspection.

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Woman charged with cruelty

United Press International
 HOUSTON — Investigators who found 26 skinny horses, a half-eaten horse carcass, at least six horse bones and a pile of horse bones on a north Harris County tract Tuesday charged a 55-year-old woman with animal cruelty.

One horse in a barn had gnawed much of the wood off his stall gate trying to fill his stomach, investigators said, and counting skulls they estimated at least 15 horses had died and were improperly disposed of on the place.

"This is the worst case of animal cruelty on record in Harris County," Harris County Precinct 5 Constable Tracy Maxon said as he and deputies scoured the 37-acre tract on Jones Road, finding dead dogs as well as dead horses.

"We have a situation where a woman had been taking care of a number of horses and they have just been loved to death," said Constable's Capt. George Huebner. "She could not take care of them, but she would not part with them."

Maxon said his office received four months of complaints owner Johnnie Riley, 55, was not properly feeding the horses but would not sell them or let a veterinarian kill them painlessly.

Maxon said estimates of how many horses originally were on the place were conflicting, with accounts of former handlers ranging from 50 to 105. Many more may have died, he said.

The survivors, several with ribs showing and coats filthy, were impounded. Maxon said they would go to the county farm where, if a court decided Mrs. Riley could not keep them,

they would be sold or "put to sleep."

Justice of the Peace H.N. McElroy scheduled a hearing on the impoundment question within 10 days.

Veterinarian Vicki Oefinger, who accompanied officers to the scene, said the horses still alive were very neglected. Blood samples were taken for analysis, but she said preliminary indications were the horses had worms.

"It's a situation of benign neglect," Dr. Oefinger said. "I think we simply have a misguided individual here. Either she wasn't cognizant or she closed her eyes. I just can't understand it."

Riley drove up to the property while Maxon and his deputies were searching, and she angrily denied the charges, saying "I am an animal lover."

Riley said some of her horses died of old age and others had

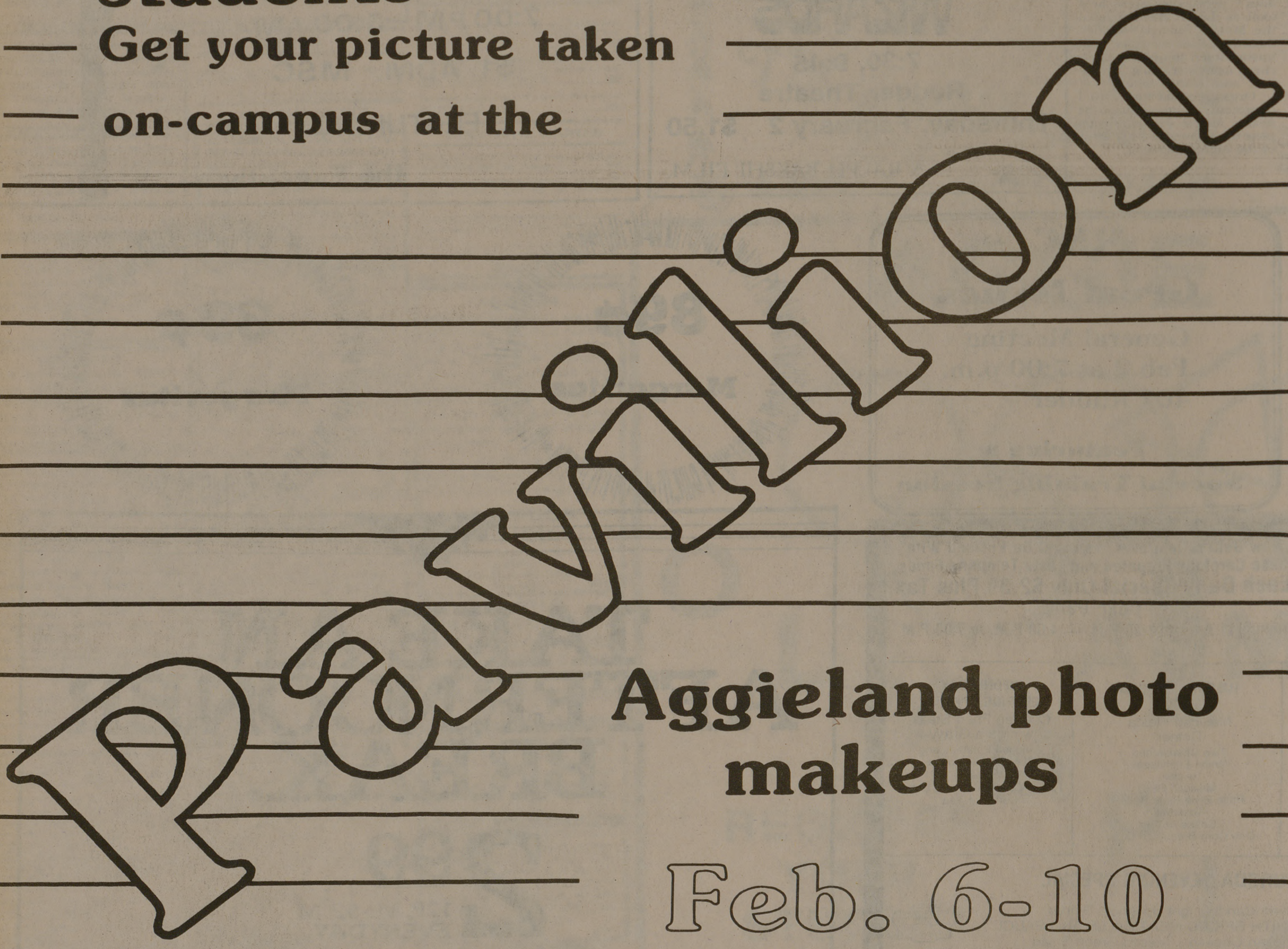
become sick, but she said she had taken care of them even though she had been going through divorce and had undergone surgery recently.

"A veterinarian has been attending. The horses have been fed and properly treated," Riley said. "There was no animal on that died of starvation."

Asked about Huebner's comment the horses had been taken to death, she said: "That's ridiculous. I think he just wants to take my horses and to give me a false illusion of glory for himself."

Huebner told reporters he heard that story four times kept saying please take your horses. Nothing happened. We just couldn't wait longer."

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Crewman body located

United Press International
 CORPUS CHRISTI — A body of man found in the Gulf of Mexico was identified Monday as a crew member from Florence B, a fishing boat missing since Jan. 16, officials said.

Nueces County Medical Examiner Dr. Joseph Ruppel identified the body as that of a crew member, but the name was withheld pending notification of relatives, spokeswoman Jo Forbus said.

"We're still working on it," she said. "We'd like to find family and ask them a question (on the victim's body) didn't have a good ID number."

However, Forbus said the body did carry a card listing name of one of the missing men. The card said the man was born in 1933, and it also listed a social security number to be checked out, she said.

She said the man apparently had two addresses, one in Son, Miss., and another in Panama, Fla.

Officials in both cities are attempting to track down the victim's next of kin, she said.

The Coast Guard discovered the body Monday about 30 miles southeast of Port Aransas while investigating a drifting buoy from the Matagorda Ship Channel. The body had become tangled in the buoy's anchor chain, officials said.

Two other members of the Florence B are still missing. The 66-foot fishing vessel sank Jan. 16 about 46 miles southeast of Galveston.

Children perish in house fire

United Press International
 SAN ANTONIO — Three children, whose mother was alone "for five minutes" to get surplus cheese, were killed Tuesday in a one-alarm fire at their westside home, officials said.

Fire Department Capt. Perry Trevino identified the victims as Veronica Gonzales, 3, and Luis Angel Gonzales, 1.

The fire gutted the front rooms of the small, wood-frame house on the city's west side, Trevino said. The children's bodies were found near the front door, he said.

The mother, Patricia Gonzales, had apparently left the children alone to collect surplus cheese from a local assistance agency and found the house in flames when she returned, he said.

"The husband was working. The other kid was at school. The mother said she went to get some cheese," Trevino said. "She said she was only gone five minutes."

Trevino said the house was engulfed in flames when the woman returned, making rescue attempt impossible.

"Nobody could have saved them," Trevino said.

Investigators said the cause of the fire had not yet been determined.