

Utility rates figured

# Computers aid cities

By DOUG VORWERK  
Reporter

A new computer program has been developed by the Texas Railroad Commission to help cities in gas utility rate cases.

The program is designed to decrease the time period of calculation in rate making, said information specialist Ray Grasshoff.

Grasshoff, who works for the Office of Information Services of the Commission, says this program is available to cities free of charge.

If a gas company wants to change their rates, they must first go to the

city government to see if they can, Grasshoff said.

A gas company usually is well prepared with all the figures they need, while most city governments, especially the small ones, don't have the knowledge to work with these numbers, he said.

Grasshoff said this program should help cities with the information they will need to bargain with the gas utility companies. "Setting rates can be very complicated," he said.

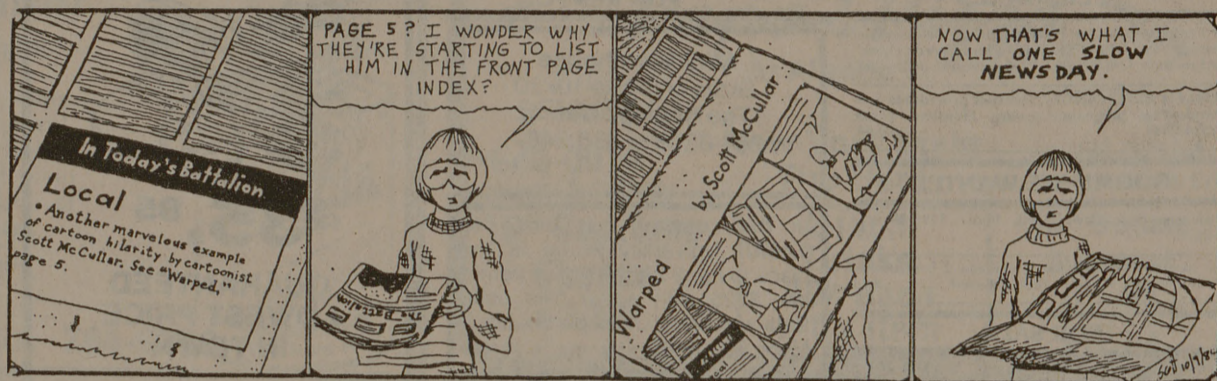
Bryan and College Station could use this service, Grasshoff said, because any city that wants to borrow the program can get it from the Commission, and get the information in a short time. A personal computer can even be used once they have the program, he said.

The program was designed by the staff of the Gas Utilities Division and members of the Commission's computer staff, Grasshoff said.

Grasshoff said he hopes this program will help put the cities on equal ground with the gas companies.

Warped

by Scott McCullar



SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



## Hotel fire complaint to be filed

United Press International

CORPUS CHRISTI — City officials decided Monday to file a complaint against the owner of a hotel where one man was killed and five severely burned in rooms not equipped with smoke alarms as required by a new state law.

Fire Marshal Jesse Guzman said the complaint against Juanita Garza, owner of the Texas Hotel, would be filed today.

Guzman said a report from a joint inspection by the fire chief, arson investigators and others would also be made public today.

Other than the absence of smoke detectors, only a few minor infractions were found in the inspection, Guzman said.

Violation of the new smoke detector law is a Class B misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$1,000 fine and/or 6 months in jail.

Dionel Garza, son of the hotel owner, said Monday that his mother was not aware of the state law.

"The fire department never came out, and no officials from the city even notified us that those detectors were required by law," he said. "If we had been aware of it, we would have taken some action."

## Judge still refuses to release couple

United Press International

HOUSTON — A judge refused Monday to free a couple he ordered jailed a month ago for declining to testify before a grand jury investigating their murder-suspect son.

State District Court Judge I.D. McMaster ordered Bernard and Odette Port returned to the Harris County jail until they agree to testify before the grand jury.

Defense attorney Randy Schaffer said he would appeal the ruling to the state Court of Criminal Appeals and ask that the couple be released on bond pending a decision.

The Ports have been jailed since Sept. 12, when they refused to testify before a grand jury that later indicted their son, David, 17, for the slaying of mail carrier Debora Sue Schatz, 23.

Schaffer argued Monday that the indictment meant the couple's testimony was not needed, and that they should be released. But prosecutors countered that the jury was considering upgrading the charge to capital murder, and that the Ports' testimony was essential.

The defense attorney claimed forcing testimony from the Ports would mean they were helping prosecutors obtain a death penalty against their son.

"It means prosecutors can say to parents in Harris County, 'If we demand it of you, you must help us kill

your child and if not, we'll throw you in jail,'" Schaffer said.

Schaffer told prosecutors the Ports would consider submitting sworn affidavits to the panel or answering certain questions with his advice. But Assistant District Attorney Jim Lavine said the couple had no power to control a grand jury investigation.

"We anticipate what they would have done by affidavit would not have done anything for the investigation," he said. "They would have said they knew nothing. If they were before a grand jury we could have tested them on the truthfulness of their answers."

Port testified initially that he might answer some questions under Schaffer's guidance, but later told Lavine he would not appear before the grand jury. Mrs. Port also refused outright to appear before the panel or answer any questions on any subject.

"Would you be willing to answer any questions if these were not detrimental to your son or his position?" Lavine asked.

"I would be more comfortable not answering any questions at all," Mrs. Port said.

Schaffer said after the judge's ruling that the grand jury investigation was over, and that prosecutors were not considering upgrading the charge against the younger Port.

## Torture

Americans tell tales about Mexican prisons

United Press International

JUAREZ, Mexico — Americans imprisoned in Mexico and returned to the United States under a 7-year-old treaty continue to tell horror stories of torture and hard labor behind bars.

Typical of the complaints related by Americans is the case of Jared Hill, 41, and his wife.

Hill, who said he and his wife were arrested a year ago for growing marijuana in their garden, was one of six American prisoners handed over to federal authorities in El Paso over the weekend.

"They had my wife in a separate cell," Hill said. "They disrobed her and took me to see her standing naked in a cell full of federal policemen. They told me to sign some papers if I didn't want my wife raped."

Hill said his wife was released 20 days after their arrest when Hill signed a confession that he alone was responsible for growing marijuana.

All of the American prisoners interviewed by news media in the latest prisoner exchange complained of torture, extortion and intimidation during their stay in Mexican prisons. Each was sentenced to seven or eight years in jail.

"Nobody beats a sentence in Mexico unless they've got a lot of money to pay off judges, lawyers, cops, you name it," said Patrick Allen Tate, 20, of San Diego, Calif.

The prisoners said torture and brutality were not limited to American prisoners.

American officials say it is likely that stories of mistreatment are true.

"I've heard so many stories from previous transferees that some of

them must be true," said Robert Ramos, an assistant federal public defender in El Paso who has been involved in the prisoner transfer program since it began.

The first prisoner exchange between the United States and Mexico took place in December, 1977. That month, 61 Americans were returned to the United States and 36 Mexicans were returned to prisons in their country.

Since then, hundreds of prisoners have been exchanged. The exchanges takes place about every three months.

In 1976, there were approximately 5,070 U.S. citizens in Mexican jails and 1,100 Mexicans in U.S. jails.

The program has both advantages and disadvantages.

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