

STATE AND LOCAL

Group holds vigil to support church refugee harboring

By **JEFF BRADY**
Reporter

Concerned local Christians held a candlelight vigil for three hours Sunday night in support of a movement allowing churches to harbor Central American refugees.

About a dozen members of the interdenominational group Sanctuary Advocates stood on the steps of St. Mary's Catholic Church in 21° degree weather and listened as each expressed personal concern for the responsibility of U.S. churches.

"We are here as a testimony to the brotherhood of man," said the Reverend Jeffrey Schiffmayer of St. Francis Episcopal Church.

The incident spurring the local vigil is the upcoming trial of Jack Elder, 41, Director of the Catholic-sponsored Casa Oscar Romero shelter for Central Americans at San Benito, Texas.

Elder was tried earlier this year on federal charges that he transported three Salvadoran aliens from a San Benito refugee center to a Harlingen bus Station in 1984.

Elder's defense contended that international law and the 1980 Refugee Act made the Salvadorans bona fide refugees and that his religious right to grant sanctuary to war victims was violated by the law against harboring or transporting illegal aliens.

The jury acquitted him Jan. 24. His acquittal was the sanctuary movement's first victory in its conflicts with U.S. immigration law.

Now Elder faces a second federal trial, this one involving fellow sanctuary worker Stacey Lynn Merkt. Set in Brownsville, the two are to be tried today for transporting two illegal aliens in an unrelated case. Ms. Merkt was convicted on such a



Photo by **DEAN SAITO**

Members of the Sanctuary Advocates stand on the steps of St. Mary's Catholic Church.

charge last year and placed on probation. A local spokesman for Brazos Valley Peace Action says most refugees come to this country because they are chased out of Central or South America by civil war.

"They are not wanted in their

home nations," says spokesman Dale Nave. "A large portion of the civilian population has to flee — considered to be rebel sympathizers by the government and government sympathizers by the rebels."

"U.S. immigration laws are not unilaterally applied," says Nave. East

European and Soviet refugees get asylum in this country easily, he says, because they are classified as political refugees. But those who arrive here from countries in this hemisphere are supposedly economic refugees, and Nave says therefore rarely get asylum.

Group sponsors handicapped awareness

By **KIRSTEN DIETZ**
Staff Writer

To increase awareness of the problems facing the handicapped, the Texas A&M Student Council for Exceptional Children will be sponsoring several activities this week.

Dr. John Koldus, vice president for Student Services, will carry out his regular afternoon routine sitting in a wheelchair Tuesday.

Koldus said he has done something similar in the past, but has never had to negotiate a wheelchair in his office. He also has played in wheelchair basketball games for several years.

"As a person who has no obstacles, you don't recognize the obstacles there are around the campus," Koldus said.

"The different thing for me is it's very tiresome, in terms of my arms and shoulders."

Tentatively, a panel of supervisors or owners who employ the handicapped is scheduled for 7 p.m. in 113 Heldenfels.

Wednesday night, parents will discuss what it's like to have a handicapped child. The panel will meet at 8:30 p.m. in 402 Rudder.

In "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," students can try out wheelchairs and crutches or mimic blindness in the Memorial Student Center Thursday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Junior Jeff Scott, who is in a wheelchair, says "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" is a good idea.

"You can look at somebody and see how they act, but you can never really understand it unless you experience it," he said.

Scott said his wheelchair does not deny him access to many buildings, as most have ramps or elevators.

The biggest problem is the lack of electric doors, he said.

Most Texas A&M students and faculty are understanding of the problems he faces and are willing to help, he said.

Contests offer students chance to display their literary talents

By **CATHIE ANDERSON**
Staff Writer

"Remember the day old Flapjack died?"

parents puzzled, children cried hadn't a mark on his scrub brushy hide, curled up on the driveway and patiently died."

This is an excerpt from "Dog in the Dust" by Brad M. Whalen, a junior English major. A year ago Whalen entered the Texas A&M Poetry Contest sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society.

Three of his poems were published by Sigma Tau Delta in the booklet, "Nine Poems." Now Whalen is preparing his poetry again, but this semester he is pursuing two avenues for his writing.

Demand for original poems, compositions and short stories has increased with the creation of Litmus,

the University literary arts magazine. Both organizations are having separate literary competitions.

Both Litmus and the Texas A&M Poetry Contest will be publishing students' works in 1985.

The Memorial Student Center Literary Arts Committee, which created Litmus, is accepting short stories, poems, topical essays, and graphic art in mailbox G-9 of room 216 in the MSC, said Paul Stewart, committee chairman.

The deadline for submissions is Feb. 12.

"We're really excited about this project because it's a new way to open up writing to the students," Stewart said.

He said Litmus would be 60-90 pages long and would be published once a year.

Melissa Romine, Sigma Tau Delta president, said the group is accepting both poetry and short stories in

its contest this semester. Submissions can be taken to the English department mailroom until Feb. 15.

Neither of the contests wants names put directly on the submissions. Instead students should write their names on a 3x5 card and attach it to their work.

"I would definitely encourage students to enter their work in both competitions," Romine said.

The preface to "Nine Poems" says that the English honor society hoped that the interest in the contest would "... flourish into the creation of a literary magazine for Texas A&M and for Brazos County."

At the end of last semester, several students approached the Memorial Student Center Council with this idea, which brought about The Memorial Student Center Literary Arts Committee.

Aggieland price raised by Student Publications

By **LYNN RAE POVEC**
Staff Writer

The price of the 1986 Aggie-land will increase from \$15 to \$20, the Student Publications Board decided Friday.

"We've been talking about this for three years," said Don Johnson, director of Student Publications. "We've been trying to keep the cost down because we wanted to be as fair as we could to students."

The Aggie-land is currently the least expensive yearbook in the Southwest Conference at 1.8 cents a page, Johnson said. Raising the cost per page to 2.4 cents for the 1986 book will keep the Aggie-land the least expensive yearbook in the SWC, he said.

Aggie-land Editor Vanell Lee said the price of the yearbook hadn't been changed — the last

price increase was in 1976 — because the book was making money. But costs are increasing, she said.

The 1983 and 1984 yearbooks cost more than \$16 each, Johnson said, and the 1985 book will cost more than \$17.

The Aggie-land is not subsidized. In addition to the \$15 a book that students pay, the yearbook gets \$20,000-\$25,000 in revenues from Yearbook Associates, the photographers that take individual class pictures for the book.

"It's been a very real benefit to us the last five years," Johnson said.

The Aggie-land's contract with the company is renewed each year, but Johnson said Student Publications is not sure the contract will continue to be renewed.

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