

**ET CETERA**

**Jeweler is survivor in spite of injuries**

**Associated Press**  
**LONGVIEW** — Having 98 percent of your body burned and losing a leg at age 7 would kill most people — but Jimmy Hammonds survived and is doing fine 30 years later.

"I really don't consider myself handicapped," he says. "I stand on my two legs just like you stand on yours — only one of mine is wood."  
 Hammonds' success story begins with a young child who lost his family in a house fire and ends with a talented jeweler who has a family of his own.

In 1955, a wood heater exploded in his Clarksville home, killing his mother, grandfather, aunt and sister. "Because I was so badly burned, the doctor kept me in a local hospital for three days to see if I was going to live," Hammonds says. "Then they sent me to John Sealy Hospital in Galveston, where I stayed for a year."

During his first month in the Galveston hospital, his leg was amputated because of gangrene. Between the ages of 7 and 18, he had 52 operations.

Hammonds received his first artificial leg at age 9 through the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

"They furnished all my legs, including the one I'm wearing now," he says. "And they paid my fare to and from the hospital."

Even with the commission's help, Hammonds' childhood was a struggle.

"School was a little difficult for me," he recalls. "I entered second grade at age 12, and I missed a lot of school because of the frequent operations. It was a problem."

"At 18, I quit after finishing the eighth grade. It was sort of a case of having to go. I was living with my grandmother at the time and she died. So, I had to get a job to support myself."

Hammonds worked in a bakery, then in a gas station, and finally as a mechanic, until at age 23, shortly after getting married, he was burned again.

"I had been working on a car and came into the house to clean up for dinner," he says. "I used some gasoline to wash off the dirt and oil, and when I went next to the clothes dryer, the pilot ignited the fumes and my arm. I had third-degree burns."

Hammonds' wife, Mary Yvonne, worked for several months while he recuperated. He later got work, and in 1971 Yvonne bore him the first of their three sons.

In 1972 Hammonds was advised by a Daingerfield jeweler, Robert Spurlock, to get into the jewelry business. Hammonds liked the idea,

and so did the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

"Texas Rehab said they would go along with the program if I would move to Longview and attend Kilgore College," he says. "They paid my tuition and made it possible to go to school. I took some odd jobs, Yvonne worked and I drew SSI (Supplemental Security Income). We made it through."

When Hammonds was in the first month of Kilgore College's jewelry and watchmaking course, Longview jewelry store owner Wes Murray came to the class seeking a new jeweler.

"My instructor set up the interview and I accepted the offer," Hammonds recalls. "I had two other offers from out in Abilene, but I liked Longview and didn't want to move — and I like Mr. Murray."

Hammonds says he is specializing in jewelry, setting diamonds, repairing rings, gold bands, necklaces and bracelets. He once set a \$20,000 diamond in a mounting. He likes casting — making molds which are filled with molten gold to make jewelry.

Hammonds credits Murray with teaching him about jewelry. "I've learned a lot about the sales end of the business, too, from watching Mr. Murray," he adds.

Hammonds' drivers license is unusual. It states he can drive a standard transmission vehicle as long as he wears his artificial leg.

"The examiners made me take the test four times because they didn't think I could do it," he says. "Actually, the statement on the license is sort of silly, because you really can't drive a standard transmission without wearing the leg."

Remembering his childhood, Hammonds says he found few social restrictions because of his injuries. He could do everything but run, and "everything" ranged from riding bicycles and motorcycles to rodeoing.

When riding a bicycle, he weights one pedal with a piece of lead.

His sons — Jerry, 13, Tony, 9, and Brian, 5 — are all competitive, and each learned to ride 20-inch bikes at age 4.

The Hammondses enjoy swimming, camping and playing miniature golf. They are also active with Trinity Baptist Church.

Hammonds does not consider himself handicapped.

"I don't like sympathy," he says, "and I don't rely on it. I've always felt you can do anything until you prove you can't do it, and don't say 'can't' until you've tried. And then try again. You need a certain amount of help to get started, but you have to break the ties and get out on your own."

**Austin seeks to improve water-treatment system**

**Associated Press**  
**AUSTIN** — The amount of waste water spilling into the Colorado River has city council members seeking voter approval of \$50 million bond package to build a better waste water treatment system.

Mayor Ron Mullen has challenged other river communities — including Bastrop, which has sued the City of Austin over the pollution of the river — to match the treatment level that Austin will give waste water entering the Colorado.

"The council will direct the staff to take steps to significantly improve the quality of discharge permits at all wastewater treatment plants operated by the city," said Mullen.

"We are prepared to join others in encouraging higher discharge permit standards not only on our section of the Colorado River, but the entire river and on all the state's waterways," he said. "It is time for those who spend their time criticiz-

ing Austin to start working with us and not against their city in this important area."

Mullen said the Texas attorney general's office told him the city would be cited Tuesday because of two sewage spills that allegedly allowed 2.5 million gallons of raw sewage to enter Williamson Creek, a tributary of the Colorado.

The Department of Water Resources asked the attorney general's office to take action against the city after the executive director of the state agency said the spills did not seem to be accidental, as the city claimed.

City officials are spending \$236 million to increase sewage treatment capacity by 50 percent. Last year voters approved a \$955 million bond package of which \$450 million was earmarked for water and waste water facilities.

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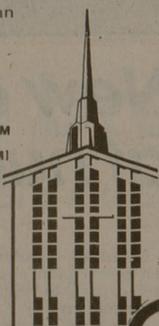
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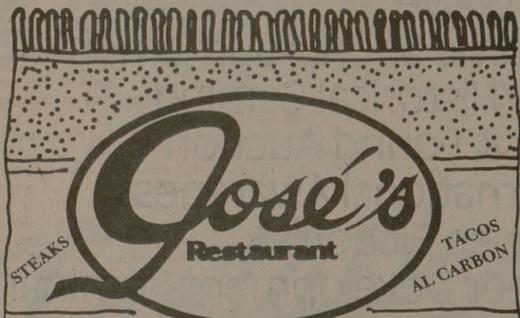
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