

State and Local

Blooms sprouting at A&M

Maintenance workers help out spring in air

By CARLA CRAWFORD
Reporter

Punxatawney Phil, the weather-forecasting groundhog, didn't see his shadow Sunday, so according to legend, spring is just around the corner.

But at Texas A&M, you don't need a groundhog to know that spring is near.

Just ask any one of the 60 landscape maintenance construction workers.

Eugene Ray, director of grounds maintenance, says the grounds Maintenance Department has been preparing for spring long before Groundhog Day.

"We grow about 125,000 plants and flowers a year," he said.

Among the spring flowers to be planted around campus this year are 8,000 red, white and blue petunias in honor of the Texas Sesquicentennial, he said.

Ray said the petunias, which will hit their blooming peak in April and will flower in June, will be planted in early March.

The Sesquicentennial petunias will be planted at the campus entrance in front of the System Administration Building, around the Albritton Tower, and at the flag pole in the Quadrangle, Ray said.

Other spring flowers to look for are daffodils, Ray said.

About 2,000 to 3,000 daffodil bulbs will be planted around the Albritton Tower, he said.

The abundant pansies, poppies, calandula, and dianthus in bloom now at the bell tower and the south gate of campus are winter annuals and will disappear with the arrival of warmer temperatures, he said.

But as the winter plants disappear, the spring blooms will follow. And Ray says that may be sooner than usual.

"I think we'll have an early



Two Texas A&M students walk past Ornamental Pyrus outside Hart Hall. The trees blossom in early spring, but the blossoms don't remain for too long.

Photo by RANDY MERRILL

spring," Ray said. "Trees are getting ready to leaf out."

Dr. William C. Welch, extension landscape horticulturist, agreed and said the campus should also soon have an abundance of wildflowers.

The trees with the white blossoms presently found all over campus are called Ornamental Pyrus, Welch said.

The trees blossom in early spring, but unfortunately they aren't around too long, he said.

Wagon train allowed to circle Texas Capitol

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The wagons circled the Capitol on Tuesday, a tribute to the negotiating talents of Sesquicentennial Wagon Train leaders and local traffic officials.

Last week, it looked like the horse-powered entourage might not be welcomed in downtown Austin because of the potential traffic mess. But Austin police eventually decided the whole thing would be manageable.

"Things have worked out beautifully," Wagon Train Association President Charles Oliver of Dallas said as he watched about 50 wagons roll past the Capitol.

Austin police said the event went smoothly, marred only by the death of a horse who just "pooped out," according to Capt. R.G. Wilson.

The horse died after being un-

hitched from a wagon on a busy street in South Austin.

The long trip began Jan. 2 in Sulphur Springs and is scheduled to end July 3 in Fort Worth.

"It's not the most direct route between Sulphur Springs and Fort Worth, but it may be the fun route," Gov. Mark White pointed out as he welcomed the wagon train to Austin.

Hundreds of schoolchildren rang the Capitol to watch the wagons. They cheered and whooped as the modern pioneers rolled by.

"I think it's very important that all of them get a taste of the flavor of the history of this state — to learn to love it as all of us do," White said of the children.

Will Howard, chairman of the Travis County Sesquicentennial Committee, told the spectators they were seeing living history, an almost-

exact replay of the wagon trains that brought settlers west.

"This is literally and exactly how they did it. They didn't have Velcro though," he said, referring to some of the fittings on the wagons.

The history of the Capitol and the wagon trains cross, according to Howard.

"This Capitol was put here and 80 percent of the justification for it was purely to draw the population westward," he said. "We wanted to populate this great land that we had."

After a brief ceremony, Howard said the Capitol roll-by was proof that the wagon train can co-exist with modern traffic.

"And now at this point I wish to challenge San Antonio," he said. "If the wagon train can come here to the Capitol it can go to the Alamo on March 2."

Audit report finds errors in contractors' payment

Associated Press

GRAPEVINE, Texas — A Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport contractor was paid twice for \$100,000 worth of work while another was paid \$41,000 for work never performed, according to an independent audit of the airport.

The 35-page audit released Monday alleges funds were diverted from one contract to another without airport board approval, while management falsified records and circumvented state contract bidding laws.

The investigation began in July after officials discovered irregularities in a contract between Ryan Construction Co. and American Airlines.

In September Airport Executive Director Ernest Dean retired and a criminal investigation began into management procedures.

The audit findings have been turned over to a task force investigating allegations of wrongdoing

and were to be reviewed by airport board members.

The report showed consultants were paid an average profit of 24 percent, while industry standards call for about 8 percent.

On at least one occasion, the audit found, staff members coached a potential bidder on how to violate state bidding laws.

The report was issued by special auditor John Loving, a certified public accountant, and a team of auditors.

Twenty-three of 347 contracts entered into by the airport between 1980 and October 1985 were reviewed. Those contracts represent about 37 percent of the dollars spent during that time.

Twenty-four pages address problems in the planning and engineering department, which drew the most criticism.

Loving recommended the department be totally reorganized and the

section responsible for administering contracts be made independent.

After reading the report, Dean said there obviously were problems at the middle-management level of which he was unaware but that there never was an attempt to intentionally deceive the board.

"One thing I really resent was, in two or three places, the mention of an apparent intent to deceive the board," Dean said. "There was never an intent to deceive anybody."

Other findings:
• Work sheets on contracts often incorrectly identified the work to be performed. Board members, therefore, often did not know what they were approving.

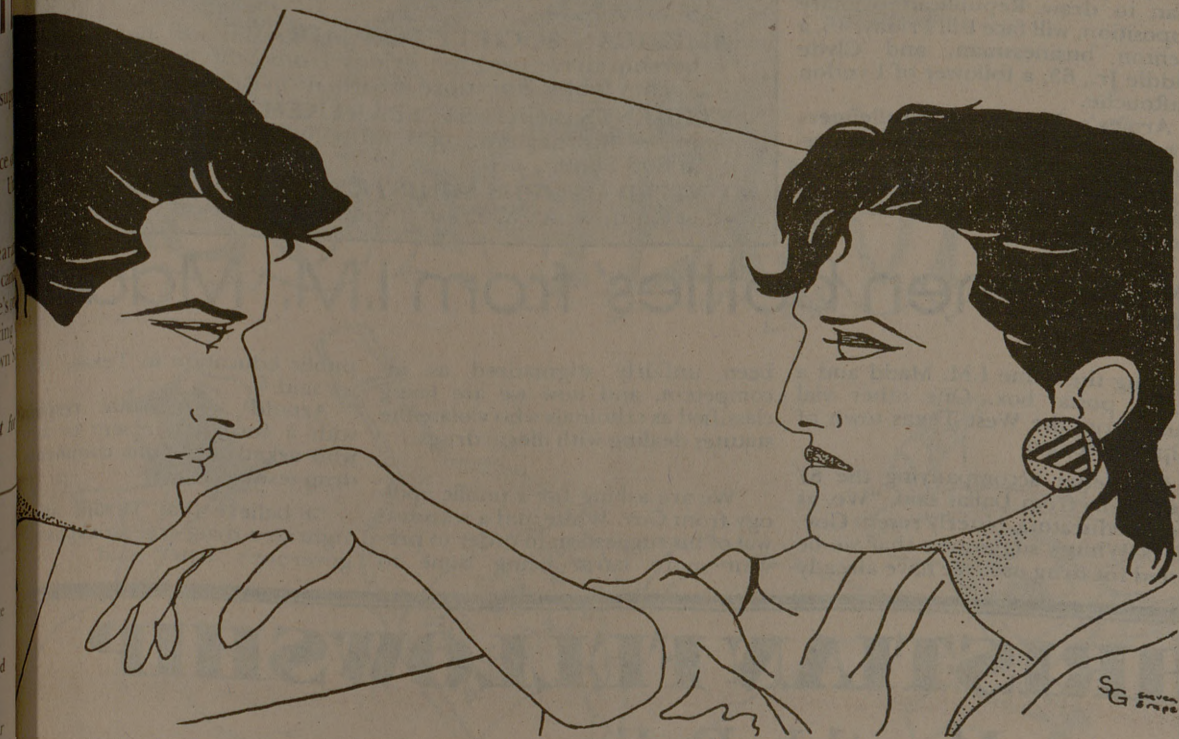
• Independent auditors were not independent and therefore were subject to pressure from other staff members. Audits were done primarily on tenant airlines and concessionaires, not on construction contractors or the airport's own operations.



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Dr. Joseph LoPiccolo

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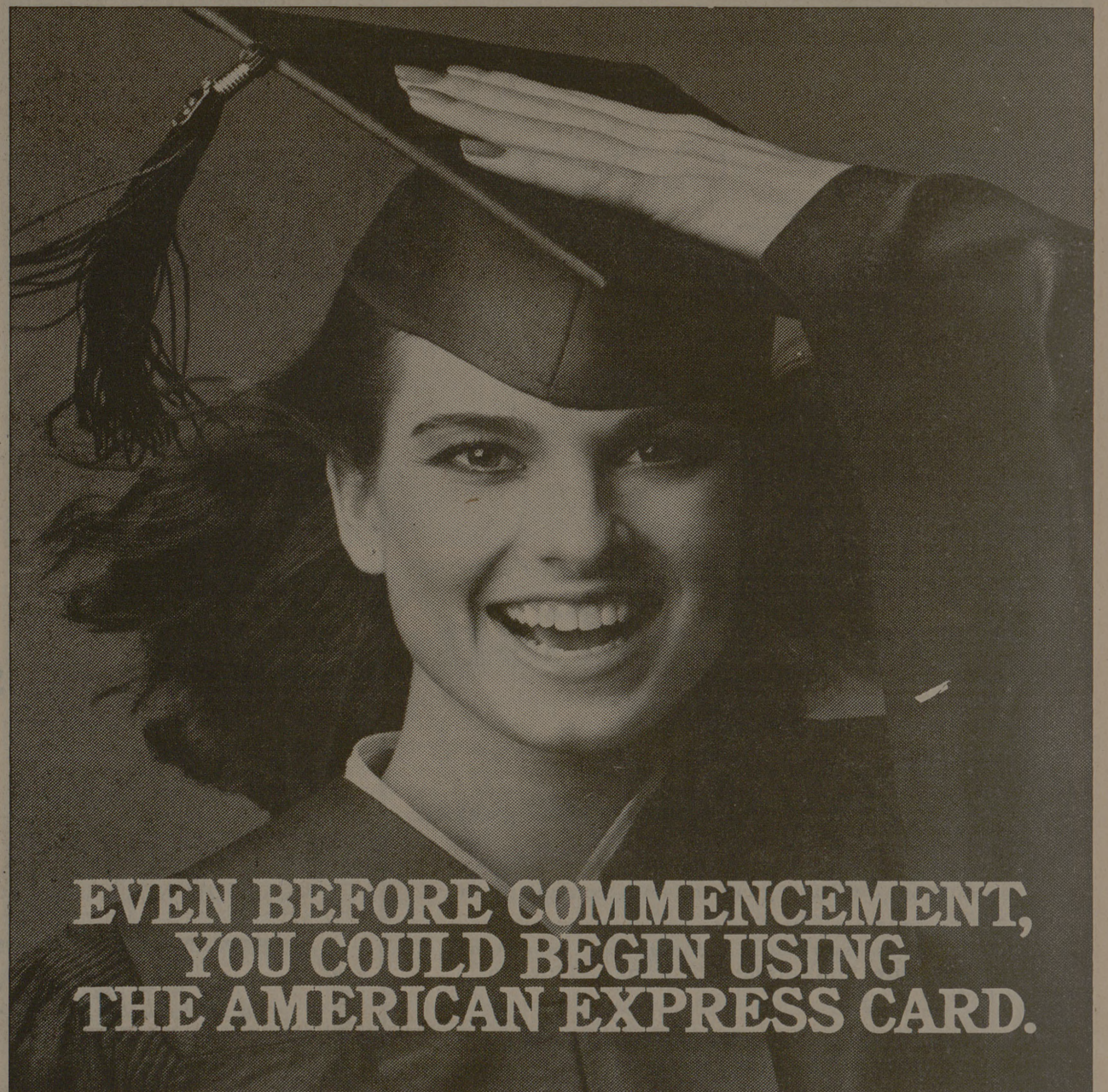
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