

Warped



Insurance laws 2nd target for consumer groups in Texas

AUSTIN (AP) — Top spokesmen for statewide consumer groups agreed Monday that efforts to change Texas' insurance laws will be second only to the crucial issue of raising state revenues during the 1987 Legislature.

Carol Banger, Southwest director of the Consumers Union, told a news conference. "Questions about the growing costs and availability of insurance should not result in solutions, which deprive consumers of important rights and put profits before human health and safety."

Rebecca Lightsey, representing the Alliance for Legal and Insurance Equity, said, "Simply accepting the rhetoric of the industry, that an increase in lawsuits is causing the problem, will not only leave us in the same bind, it could seriously limit some of the major court protections many consumers need."

Soaring costs of liability insurance and its availability have been under study by a House-Senate committee for several months in preparation for making recommendations to the 1987 session.

Banger said another important issue faced by legislators are proposals to deregulate banking and allow interstate operation of banks.

She said Consumers Union was not against interstate banking but wants stronger disclosure laws and more safeguards to protect the average customer.

An effort to allow paid-off portions of homesteads to be placed under a second mortgage failed during the 1985 legislative session.

Shoe



Valdo



War for the roses

State's rose enthusiasts prepare for war against bugs

ARLINGTON (AP) — John Long lets spring's balmy breezes and fragrant blossoms with the war cry: "Spray! Spray!"

While many of us are rummaging through the closet looking for the ice chest and picnic basket, Long and hundreds of Dallas-area rose enthusiasts are locked in mortal combat with sucking aphids, ravenous beetles and deadly fungi.

If it sounds serious, it is. Victory will mean triumph at one of the state's major rose shows; defeat deflatingly means a home-grown garden of bug-eaten flowers.

At work, Long is a supervisor in Arlington's street maintenance department. At home, he is president

of the Mid-Cities Rose Society, which claims 200 members.

Even the uninitiated cannot pass Long's modest suburban house without getting the clear impression that he is not your garden-variety rose-grower. In raised beds along the house are more than 300 varieties of rose bushes, each neatly labeled with official names such as "Ingrid Bergman," "Sir Harry Pilkington," and "Uncle Joe." The center of the front lawn has been churned over to provide a quarantine bed for exotic specimens from Germany and Africa.

Long, 61, has been working every day since February, pruning and fertilizing his thicket of rose bushes. At dusk, he retreats to a shed in his

backyard where he mixes his own pesticide with the concentration of a chemist.

Last year he did not follow his spraying schedule and paid the price when spider mites invaded. "They got to the foliage before I could stop them," he says. "It cost me a queen."

The queen: the best bloom of the show, the award every rose-grower covets. In six years of shows, Long has won three queens. Many serious gardeners of longer tenure are still waiting to produce that perfect specimen.

J.D. Downing, whose Haltom City home is obscured by more than 500 rose bushes, has earned ribbons and second-place honors but has yet to

win the highest award, although he enters about a dozen shows a year.

One year the Downings heard rumors that a magnificent new strain had been perfected by Canadian botanists. The couple promptly hopped a plane, rented a car and spent weeks touring nurseries throughout Canada.

The workload before the rose shows this month and next in Dallas, Fort Worth and the mid-cities is particularly heavy. The mild winter set the stage for a bug boom. Long says the beetle challenge is the worst.

So the rose-growers spray arduously, day in and day out, fiercely protecting the still-unopened blooms they have pinpointed as potential prize stock.

Police find no leads in Arlington teen's death

ARLINGTON (AP) — Investigators do not have "a prayer of a lead" in the shooting death of an 18-year-old student believed to have been victim of a random act of violence, a police spokesman said Monday.

Teresa Laune Branch was shot in the chest, police said. She was apparently jogging through a neighborhood to her parents' home after her car broke down Saturday night.

Her body was found by a group of joggers about 10:30 p.m. Saturday night in an Arlington church parking lot.

"We haven't a prayer of a lead. We have turned up nothing. We have nothing to show for our work."
— Police spokesman Jim Willett.

There was no evidence that Branch had been robbed or sexually assaulted, police said.

Police spokesman Jim Willett said, "We haven't a prayer of a lead. We have turned up nothing. We have nothing to show for our work."

Willett said investigators returned to the middle-class neighborhood

where Branch was found and interviewed residents, but were unable to find anyone who had heard or witnessed the shooting.

The killing appears to have been a random attack, Willett said.

The minister of the church where

Branch's body was found said the area is surrounded by houses.

The Rev. Leon Sanders said, "Our kids play in that parking lot all the time. I've lived here almost 11 years and nothing like this has happened before."

Laune Pitts, Branch's aunt, described her as a straight-A student. She said Branch had been attending school and living with her grandparents in Decatur for more than a year.

She had recently been voted Sidell's "Most Attractive Student," Pitts said.

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