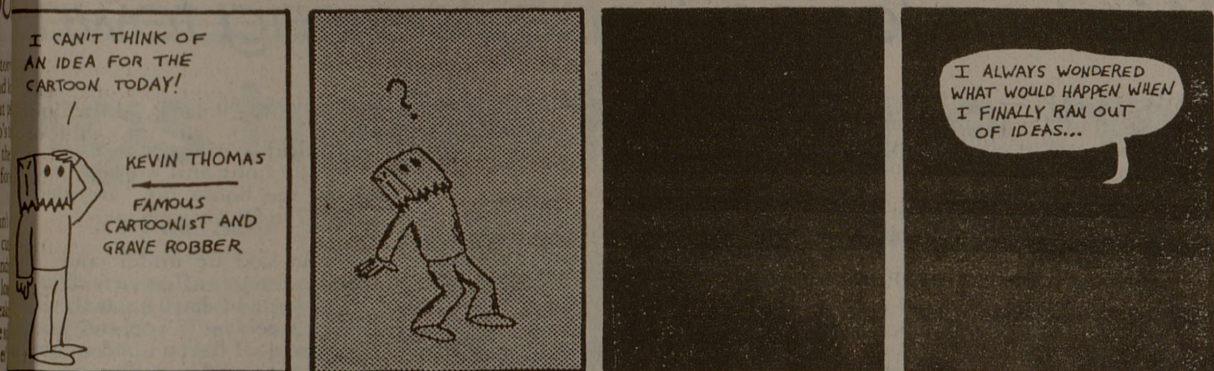


Waldo



by Kevin Thomas

Consumer group seeks morticians board probe

AUSTIN (AP) — The Consumers Union called Tuesday for an investigation of the State Board of Morticians, which regulates the sale of funeral and burial services in Texas.

Carol Barger, Southwest regional director of the consumers organization, told a news conference, "It is obvious the board won't clean up its own act. It is time for the Legislature to act to reform the board. Reforming the funeral law has not been enough."

A board spokesman said the agency welcomes an investigation and board members would cooperate in any way they could.

Barger said the request for an investigation was sent to Rep. Brad Wright, R-Houston, chairman of the House Public Health Committee.

"He seemed very interested," Barger said of her conversation with Wright.

Board Chairman James Broussard said, "We will cooperate in any way we can. We think we earnestly try to do our job. We do not oppose an investigation. We don't feel we have anything to hide."

Barger's request was backed up by Grady Baskin Jr., a Tyler insurance executive who was a public member of the board for six years.

In 1984, Baskin made a personal survey of 24 Texas funeral homes and said he found only one in full compliance with the law.

Barger said her call for an investigation was sparked in part by a recent report by Cable News Network, which used hidden television cameras in visiting Texas funeral homes.

"The entire CNN report and other evidence demonstrates mis-

presentations and high pressure sales tactics to bereaved families and other abuses of the law are all too common in Texas," Barger said.

"Also, all too rare is any enforcement of the rules, or discipline to violators by the State Board of Morticians," she said.

Barger said the CNN report shows "the funeral industry's continuing blatant disregard for the law."

She said the report shows funeral home employees misrepresenting the preservative qualities of embalming, misrepresenting the protective capabilities of caskets and liners and failing to provide customers with a price list.

Barger said a legislative investigation "may find it necessary to change the composition of the board, remove some members from the board, or put regulation of the funeral industry under some other body, such as the Department of Health."

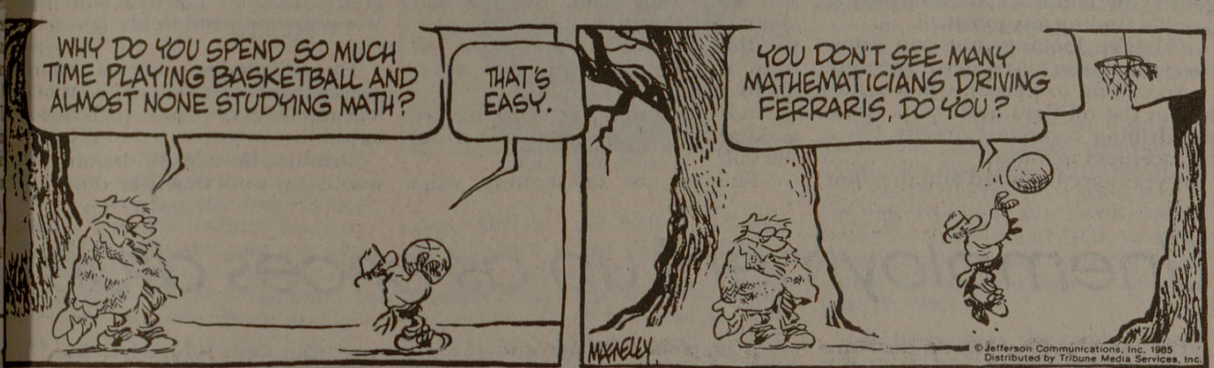
In 1979, the Sunset Advisory Commission recommended abolishing the board and giving the duties to some other state agency.

The Legislature did not phase out the board but did change its makeup from six funeral directors and three public members to five funeral directors and four public members.

Barger said the Consumers Union made a survey of Texas funeral homes in 1985 and found that 58.3 percent were still not in compliance with the law.

"We have had about 70 complaints since Dec. 1," Broussard said. "I venture that 30 or 40 of those have no validity or should have been directed to another state agency. Under the statute we are doing the best we can."

Shoe



by Jeff MacNelly

Traffic murder gets 30 years for Austin man

AUSTIN (AP) — Manuel Espinoza, 22, who prosecutors say shot a man in the face because he was driving too slowly, has pleaded guilty to murder in exchange for a 30-year prison sentence.

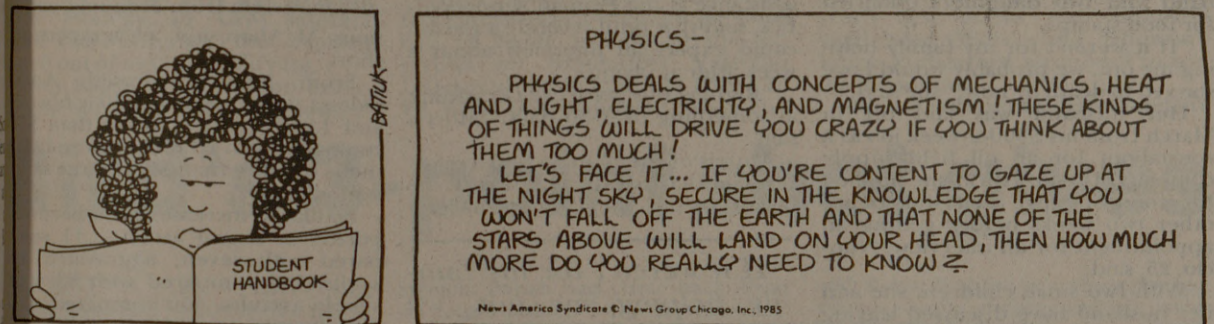
Espinoza was charged in the Feb. 17 slaying of 44-year-old Louis Garcia Jr.

Garcia was driving a friend home when a car pulled alongside them on a city street, said Brian Case, an assistant Travis County district attorney.

The second car's occupants yelled obscenities at Garcia, then drove up the street, stopped and backed up to Garcia's car, which had stopped to allow the passenger out at his house.

A man in the back seat pulled a shotgun from his coat and fired point-blank at Garcia's head before the car sped away, Case said. Garcia died shortly after.

Funky Winkerbean



by Tom Batiuk

Mexican president gets whirlwind tour of state of Sonora

HERMOSILLO, Mexico (AP) — From steaming coast to desert, from electronics plant to sparkling new bakery, a presidential tour goes through the border state of Sonora at a drill sergeant's pace.

The trip Sunday and Monday by President Miguel de la Madrid was one of dozens he makes each year, part of a Mexican political tradition dating back decades.

The "giras," the Spanish word for tours, are intended to take the presi-

dent to all of Mexico's 31 states each year. It is part political campaigning, part inspection of public projects and other major — and not a few minor — enterprises around Mexico.

"Is there anything left to inaugurate?" a reporter wryly asked de la Madrid after two days of hopping up on boats, touring plants and unveiling plaques in a non-stop procession through Sonora.

"Not for the moment," the president responded with a robust laugh.

Officially, the tours are a way for the president to carry the symbol of government and keep in touch with every point of this nation of nearly 80 million people marked by vast regional differences.

They also get the president out of his office in the Los Pinos complex of Mexico City and into the seats of provincial power as well as the back roads and byways of the nation.

Sonora, Mexico's second-largest state, has a strong tradition of re-

gional independence and resentment of the concentration of power in Mexico City. Some here say there generally is little enthusiasm for visits by any Mexican president.

Certainly little was evident among the citizenry as de la Madrid whizzed through the state by bus and plane on this trip.

The plaza in front of the Palace of Government in this state capital was fairly full with a quiet group Sunday night for what was billed as the presi-

dent's "greeting to the people of Hermosillo."

Occasionally small crowds gathered to watch the motorcade breeze by.

One of the few moments of genuine excitement visible was when an elderly woman watched from a porch in the Gulf of California port of Guaymas. She waved both her arms high in the air in greeting, with a huge grin on her face.

The tour started Sunday in Guay-

mas, where the annual Navy Day celebration was held.

De la Madrid and his delegation sailed out into the Bay of Guaymas to observe naval ceremonies and maneuvers that included a simulated cleanup of an oil spill.

Then the tour headed to Nacozari for the inauguration of a \$332.7 million copper smelter and groundbreaking for an accompanying acid plant.

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