

State and Local

5th grader takes to the skies with flying hobby

ARLINGTON (AP) — Fifth-grader John Hill has to prop himself up on three pillows when he takes the controls of a Cessna 172, but he says flying the four-seater is plain sailing.

"It's easy," the 10-year-old Arlington elementary school student said. "You just give it the gas until you get to 60 mph, you pull up the steering wheel and you go up."

"And, oh yeah. You got to keep the plane in the middle of the runway."

John, who learned how to drive a car when he was seven, says he wants to be an astronaut when he grows up. In the meantime, he drives a car in the parking lot at his father's business and flies airplanes.

His father, Johnny Hill, noted that his son doesn't drive without a licensed driver along as passenger and doesn't fly without flight instructor Mike Fields.

"He has to be 15 to solo legally," said Fields, who works for Cothran Aviation. "If he were old enough, John could complete the requirements for a pilot's license within a year."

John said he has trouble convincing his friends that he flies an airplane. He started in December 1985, when he asked his parents for flying lessons.

John now flies once a week during the school year and three to four times a week in the summer.

His mother, Patsy Hill says the \$52-per-hour flight instruction bills make it an expensive hobby, but she said the expense is worthwhile.

"If it were just a hobby, with no future for him, I don't think I'd be supportive," she said. "But this is what he wants to do."

John, a member of the Junior Astronauts Association, said he would like to work with the space program eventually. Before then, he wants to earn a place in the Guinness Book of World Records by flying from California to South Carolina next summer.

"It will be the longest trip for the youngest person on a trip across the country," John said.

Fish Camp '86 about to begin

By Kathryn Greenwade
Reporter

This summer 2,592 Texas A&M freshmen will be introduced to Ag traditions — and other freshmen at Fish Camp.

On Friday, the first of four camps will leave for Lakeview Methodist assembly near Palestine for the traditional four-day course in being an Aggie.

The freshmen have an opportunity to start over again and set new goals after evaluating all they did in high school," assistant director David Lawhorne says.

Rei Reeves, another assistant director, said people make Fish Camp work. The counselors have the most contact with the freshmen.

This year 1,300 students applied

for the 648 counselor positions, she said. They aren't paid salaries and pay the same fee to go to camp as the freshmen do.

Reeves said the Fish Camp staff wants every freshman to get something out of camp.

"I think the most important thing the freshmen gain is friends," Reeves said. "Not only do they gain friends that are freshmen, but also upperclassmen friends who they can turn to for help."

The summer is the busiest time for the staff members as they register the freshmen and assign them to camps, Reeves said. This year all the registration is being done by mail.

She said the work actually begins in September when the directors are selected. There are 10 directors,

each in charge of a different aspect of Fish Camp.

Each session contains five camps that are headed by a chairman and a co-chairman, Reeves said.

The chairmen have the task of choosing the counselors from the thousands of applicants. Reeves said the selection of counselors takes several months.

The counselors must attend several training sessions and spend a great deal of time in the spring planning for their camp, she said.

Each camp has a name, mascot and color and is named after important people with ties to A&M.

This year, for example, there are camps named after Shelby Metcalf, the Aggie basketball coach, and former Chancellor Arthur Hansen.

A new addition this year will be an orientation offered for the parents so that they will understand what the freshmen will be doing for the four days of camp, Lawhorne said.

The parents often seem a little worried seeing their son or daughter being greeted by counselors wearing Kermit the Frog hats and acting crazy, Lawhorne said, since they were told their children would be spending a week with responsible young adults.

The directors stay in town for the summer to work on plans for camp, he said. Chairmen and counselors also come in twice during the summer to help out with some of the work.

Texas officials back 3 new banking bills

AUSTIN (AP) — Interstate and branch banking got support from state regulatory officials Monday but some legislators still had questions.

"What does an old family bank do if someone buys the Taco Bell across the street and puts in a branch bank?" Rep. Stan Schleuter, D-Killeen, asked at a hearing of the House Financial Institutions Committee.

Rep. Bill Haley, D-Center, asked, "Who's to say if the money will come in here or go out to other states if an out-of-state bank buys a Texas bank?"

The committee held a long public hearing on three measures presented by Rep. Bruce Gibson, D-Cleburne, and supported by Texas independent bank and holding companies.

Gibson said the three measures — one on interstate banking and two on branch banking — would not be brought up for a committee vote until, and if, Gov. Mark White opens the special session to banking issues.

Gibson said one measure would allow nationwide interstate banking, meaning that any bank

or holding company in another state could buy a bank or holding company in Texas, or the other way around.

The other two measures, one a proposed constitutional amendment, would allow banks to have up to three branch banks within a county.

Present law allows a bank to have service branches only within a certain distance of the home bank.

State banking commissioner James Sexton said, "Generally we are a supporter of these bills."

L.L. Bowman, commissioner of the Savings and Loan Department, said, "We agree with Sexton."

Bob Lane, speaking for the Texas Bankers Association, said there could be no "Taco Bell" branch banks because a provision in the bill would protect home offices for five years against new competition.

Sexton urged that branch banks be required to fulfill the same requirements that a home bank does when it applies for a state charter.

FFA membership hit by economy

HOUSTON (AP) — Enrollment in Future Farmers of America, a vocational club that was enjoying a boom in secondary schools just a few years ago, is going down because of education reforms and the depressed farm economy, officials say.

For example, 136 students enrolled in agriculture classes at Cypress Creek High School in Houston three years ago and the school planned to add a fourth agriculture teacher.

But last year, FFA enrollment dropped to 92 students and agriculture teachers now are being forced to teach other subjects.

Statewide, enrollment fell 3.5 percent from 55,336 students in 1985 to 53,380 students this year, said Jay Eudy, the Texas Education Agency's director of agricultural education.

"We're starting to feel like Custer," said vocational agriculture teacher Larry Cooper.

This fall, Cooper expects to teach biology for the first time since joining the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District 22 years ago.

Under educational reforms passed by the Texas Legislature in 1984, students were given an advanced curriculum option that re-

duced the time available for elective courses.

The no-pass, no-play rule also prohibits students who fail a class from participating in extracurricular activities, including FFA, for the ensuing six-week grading period.

Daryl Smith, a 1986 graduate of Cypress-Fairbanks High School, said, "When I first got into ag, it was booming. That was the thing to do. And once no-pass, no-play came in, it really killed ag."

Smith, 18, belongs to a family of farmers, who in better times made agriculture their lives work.

Company sends pets up, up and away

HOUSTON (AP) — Pets no longer have to be left behind when their owners travel by air, thanks to help from a new company specializing in animal shipments.

The 7-month-old company, named Animal-Port-Houston, handles all the details involved in shipping pets, from picking up the animal at home to delivering it to the owners at the scheduled destination.

An affiliate company handles ground transportation for the pets, Animal-Port-Houston company president Tom Schooler said.

The bulk of the company's business is relocations. Customers moving to Houston can arrange for the pet to be shipped before the move and the pet will be housed at the airport kennels until the owners move into their new home, he said.

"We house them overnight while they're awaiting customs clearance," said Schooler, who added that the company is the only private company of its type in the United States.

Since many foreign flights arrive late at night, customers can arrange to have the pet picked up, exercised

and housed in the airport kennels, Schooler said. The animals usually remain in airport warehouses until they get customs clearance and move on to their U.S. destination.

The cost to ship a medium size animal from Houston to Boston is about \$300, he said.

"We're just now breaking even," said Schooler, who plans to expand the company by offering service to 12 other U.S. cities within the next two years.

Legislators warned of MHMR suits

AUSTIN (AP) — The attorney general's office reminded legislators Monday that federal court suits must be considered when reviewing appropriations for the Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation Department.

Two federal court settlements have been made in suits filed against MHMR, one involving patient-staff ratios and another involving treatment of the retarded in state mental hospitals.

"The department has asked for an additional \$5.5 million, not a cut in funds," Patrick Wiseman of the attorney general's office told the Senate in a committee-of-the-whole meeting. "That much was committed in these agreements."

"If these commitments can be made, it would be a valid attempt to comply with the federal court orders. If we do not comply, it could cost us ten-fold or a hundred-fold."

"All we can do is give you our best hunch of what will cost less or more money."

Central Texas officials want pipeline route moved north

AUSTIN (AP) — Public officials from Central Texas on Monday lined up in support of an alternate proposal to move an oil pipeline north of the Edwards Aquifer, a key element of the region's water supply.

"If we continue to allow pipelines to be built over this aquifer in this area, the result, I believe, is clear," Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, D-Austin, told a Bureau of Land Management hearing. "The future water supply of Central Texas will be a disaster waiting to happen."

The route proposed by All Ameri-

can Pipeline Co. would put the pipeline from California to McCamey, Texas, 460 miles through Central Texas to Webster, south of Houston.

C.M. Hoffman of Austin, area superintendent for All American, said the pipeline will move up to 300,000 barrels a day of surplus crude oil from the West Coast to refineries on the Texas Gulf Coast.

What William Haigh of the federal Bureau of Land Management called a "flurry of lawsuits" halted the McCamey-Webster segment of the 1,700-mile 30-inch pipeline, and

an out-of-court agreement was reached between the bureau, state of Texas and pipeline company.

Haigh, who works out of the bureau's Riverside, Calif., office, said All American had agreed to abide by the bureau's environmental impact statement in the pipeline route.

The hearing Monday was the first of 10 public meetings in Texas this month as the first step in preparing a preliminary statement by January, and a final statement early next summer.

The Edwards Aquifer is the

source of drinking water for much of Central Texas, and Rep. Anne Cooper, R-San Marcos, said she was concerned about oil spills seeping through the overlying limestone formation into the aquifer.

"Unless you can assure the people who live in that area that you can clean up something or that this kind of thing won't happen, you know you're talking about two or three years without water and this is not acceptable to people, and it's not acceptable to me," she said.

She said she hoped the bureau would recommend an alternate northern route, which would loop near McGregor in McLennan County, before turning southeast to Webster.

Barrientos said, "There are just some places an oil pipeline should not be built and over our water supply is one of those places."

He also suggested moving the pipeline north.

Rep. Phyllis Robinson, D-Gon-

zales, said "there is no such thing as a leak-proof or break-proof pipe."

Hoffman said the pipeline "will provide additional tax revenue for the state and counties crossed by the pipeline (and) will serve the public interest and enhance national security."

He also said pipelines historically "have provided the safest, most cost-effective way to transport oil with less environmental impact than other transportation methods."

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