

## State and Local

# Students create a unique holiday design for the Vandivers' home

By Amy Couvillon  
Staff Writer

Christmas has arrived at the Vandivers' — thanks to 30 Texas A&M students in an advanced floral design class.

From a choir of shimmering angels on the mantelpiece to a 10-foot tree draped with pink lamé and twinkling lights, the interior of the Vandivers' home has been transformed into a Christmas wonderland.

President Frank Vandiver and his wife, Rene, say they're delighted with the student decoration arrangement.

"They did a beautiful job this year," Rene Vandiver says.

Student decoration of the president's home goes back a long way, says Jim Johnson, a senior lecturer with the horticulture department.

Even before the Vandivers arrived in 1981, Johnson's floral design students have turned out in force each year to deck the presidential halls.

"Actually, we started back about two or three or four presidents ago," he says.

Each year during the first few weeks of December, groups of Johnson's students descend on the white-timbered house near the aerobics track to practice their art.

On the front door is a large wreath, decorated in light blue and green, with a silver angel on it.

All through the inside of the house, there are many gold and silver angel figures made with shiny cloth, Styrofoam and yarn.

The Christmas tree — real, not artificial — is impressive, brushing the high ceiling of the living room.

But the most spectacular display is on the mantel. Gold figures of angels hold blue, pink and red presents. Pine garlands and dried colored plants complete the elaborate display.

Blue glass ornaments hang from the dining room chandelier, and each light fixture in the four deco-

rated rooms is draped with ribbons, greenery and pine cones.

With all the fresh greenery, the house even smells like Christmas.

Johnson says the decorations are created by the students in a design laboratory.

"It takes a whole day to go install them in the house," he says. "A lot of things have to be put together on the spot."

Just as too many cooks spoil the soup, too many floral-designers-in-training working at the same time could create chaos.

To prevent this, Johnson says, groups of students work at different times during the day.

"They come and go between classes," he says, "so we don't have 30 people tramping through the house at once."

Jan Kaltwasser, the Vandivers' house secretary, says the student invasion wasn't disruptive at all.

"They kept busy," Kaltwasser says. "There were two groups; there was a group that came before lunch and a group that came after lunch."

She says the angel theme was one of Rene Vandiver's favorites.

"She chooses the color scheme and the theme," Kaltwasser says.

"Jim Johnson orders all the materials that are needed, and the Vandivers pay for the materials."

Johnson says the colors, materials, and theme for the designs are discussed in class.

The students use greenery, pine cones, ribbons, glass ornaments, fabric and colored lights.

"We try to use as much fresh material as we can," he says, adding that many of this year's decorations were created with fresh pine, cedar and fir.

Dried plants used for the decorations came from areas throughout the world, including the Orient, India, Brazil, Central America, South America and South Africa, he says.

"The variety gives the students the opportunity to learn about these materials and learn how to work

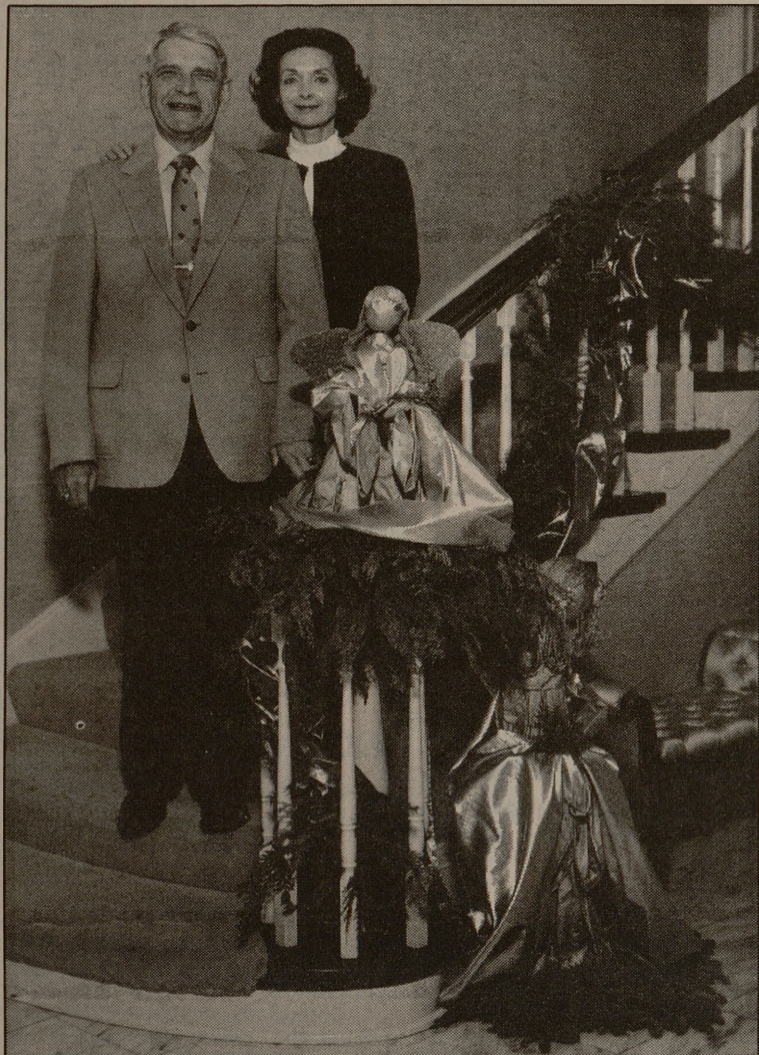


Photo by Bill Hughes

The Vandivers show off their home's Christmas decorations.

with them," Johnson says.

He says 1986 is the second year of the angel theme.

"Usually we try to do a different design each year, but ... this year

Mrs. Vandiver commented how she especially liked the angels," Johnson says. "She's very generous in leaving the ideas of what to do to us; she usually will just give us some general directions."

## Police Beat

The following were reported to the University Police Department through Monday:

### MISDEMEANOR THEFT:

• A professor reported that someone stole a camera with attachments from a table on the fourth floor of the Sterling C. Evans Library.

• Four backpacks were reported stolen.

### BURGLARY OF A MOTOR VEHICLE:

• A man reported that while he was delivering a pizza on Avenue A a radar detector was stolen from his car.

• A student reported that a rifle and other items were stolen from his car.

• A student's car was stolen between 9 and 11:30 a.m. It was found later at St. Mary's Catholic Church. The student reported that \$400 in cash and several

books were missing from her car. The investigation is continuing and has been referred to Student Affairs.

### HARASSMENT:

• A student reported she has been receiving annoying phone calls at all hours.

• Another student reported that for the last two days she had received annoying phone calls every two hours.

### BURGLARY OF A COIN OPERATED MACHINE:

• While on patrol, an officer observed a clothes hanger in the door of a candy machine on the first floor of the Academic Building.

### INDECENT EXPOSURE:

• A woman reported that a man exposed his genitals to her while she was on the third floor of Sterling C. Evans Library. The investigation is continuing.

## 2 Dallas-based banks plan \$35 billion merge

DALLAS (AP) — InterFirst Corp. and RepublicBank Corp. are combining to form a \$35 billion banking organization called First RepublicBank Corp., executives of the bank holding companies said Tuesday.

The news of the all-stock merger of the Dallas-based banking companies came a day after Texas Commerce Bancshares Inc. of Houston and Chemical New York Corp. announced they planned to merge in a \$1.1 billion deal, the largest U.S. bank merger ever.

InterFirst and RepublicBank officials said their merger would form the 12th largest U.S. bank holding company.

The transaction, subject to approval by shareholders of each company as well as federal regulatory agencies, is expected to be final sometime during the second quarter of next year, said Robert W. Stewart, chairman and chief executive officer of InterFirst Corp.

Stewart will be chairman of First RepublicBank, and Gerald W. Fronterhouse, who is chairman and chief executive of RepublicBank, will be the president and chief executive of the new company.

Fronterhouse said First RepublicBank will save \$600 million in overhead over the next few years, largely by merging operations in cities where each company now has a bank. He said the companies will probably close about 25 branches and lay off about 3,000 employees — 18 percent of the combined workforce — over the next two years.

RepublicBank is the second-largest Texas bank-holding company, with \$21.7 billion in assets as of Sept. 30, and 41 banks. InterFirst, the state's third-largest bank company, had \$18.5 billion in assets and 68 subsidiary banks. Stewart said asset shrinkage accounted for the \$35 billion combined figure.

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