

# Texas A&M The Battalion

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Betty Unterberger, discussion moderator, and Elliot Richardson listen to Roger Brooks at a Thursday SCONA program.

Photo by Bill Hughes

## Dorm policy in '87 requires 2-term signup

By Curtis L. Culberson  
Staff Writer

Dorm residents will have to sign two-semester housing contracts starting next fall and will lose their \$200 deposit if they fancy a spring-time move to an apartment.

Housing Services Supervisor John White says on-campus housing contracts were changed from one to two semesters to stabilize housing occupancy for the spring. Many students move off-campus in the spring — a time when it is difficult to fill vacancies, White says.

White says there are 62 male and 258 female dormitory vacancies this spring, while last fall about 300 men and 600 women were turned away and put on housing waiting lists because dorms were full.

"If the students who moved off-campus this spring would have done so before the fall semester, we could have filled spring vacancies with the students on waiting lists," he says.

More than 4,000 incoming freshman and transfer students have already applied for on-campus housing for next fall — more than ever before, White says.

The record number of housing applications come at the same time as residence hall renovations. Renovations will start in May on Dorms 10 and 12, closing the dorms throughout the fall semester.

David McDowell, president of the Residence Hall Association, says cadets will be moved into Gainer, Spence, and Briggs halls next fall while the two corps dorms are being renovated.

He adds that the new policy will probably cause some students to move off-campus before the fall and help cushion the housing shortage for incoming students.

The student affairs office worked with McDowell and RHA in the development of the policy and is currently working on other ways to handle the housing situation caused by dorm renovations.

Tom Murray, assistant director of Student Affairs, estimates the new contract policy will generate an additional \$170,000 by filling 1988 spring vacancies.

The additional money will be used to prevent future housing rent increases and to fund dorm renovation projects, Murray says.

White says the new policy also will cut administrative costs associated with spring sign-up.

"It costs \$1,000 in paperwork for dorm sign-ups for the spring semester and a total of 600 administrative hours, including resident advisors, head residents, area offices and the Housing Office," White says.

Jennifer Hynes, third floor resident advisor for Mosher Hall, says she understands the reasoning behind the policy change but doesn't agree with it. In the fall, her dorm is

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## Dorm rates may go up in fall term

By Jade Boyd  
Reporter

This fall, students likely will find themselves paying more to live on campus. For the first time since 1984, dormitory rates probably are going up.

Dr. Donald B. Powell, director of business services at Texas A&M, said, "It looks like the increase is going to be about 5 percent."

A final decision on dorm and board plan rates will be made in late March by the A&M System Board of Regents. At that time, any proposed rate increases will be presented to the Board, along with estimates of dorm occupancy and operating costs.

Aside from modular dorms, rates for University housing haven't increased in three years. Powell attributes this to good fiscal management and prudent maintenance by Physical Plant personnel.

Modular dorm rates were increased last fall to \$825 per semester because they previously had been priced too low, Powell said.

Rates for each type of dorm — non air-conditioned, corps, air-conditioned suite, modular and Com-

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## Chairman: Gap exists between promises, performance of U.N.

By Christi Daugherty  
Staff Writer

There is a serious shortfall between the actual performance of the United Nations and what should reasonably be expected of it, a U.N. chairman said Thursday.

Elliot Richardson, chairman of the United Nations Association of the United States, discussed the role of the United States in the U.N. before an audience of about 150 at SCONA.

Besides this shortfall, Richardson said another major area the U.N. has to tackle within the organization itself is what exactly ought to be done to reduce the shortfall between the promise of the U.N. and its actual performance.

"Here you get the largest area of disagreement about what can and ought to be done," Richardson said.

The other party in the discussion, Roger Brooks, director of policy, planning and staff in the U.S. Department of State, agrees the public image of the U.N. has weakened considerably over the years.

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"It would be an understatement to say Americans have become increasingly skeptical of the importance of the U.N.," Brooks said.

He blamed many of the U.N.'s problems on abuse of the organization by some of its member states, including the Soviet Union, which he claimed uses the U.N. for espionage purposes.

"Many Americans see the United Nations as a bastion dominated by enemies of the United States — a place where America's views are ig-

nored or unfairly silenced, her friends and allies are unfairly attacked and her democratic values are corrupted or destroyed," he said.

Richardson said Congress has tried to combat both the image problems and the legitimate problems the United States has in the U.N.

To send a message of its dissatisfaction with the U.N.'s performance, he said, Congress has withheld funds from the U.N. in the past, and the State Department has attempted to convey a similar message. But Richardson said he feels withholding funds is not the right way to communicate with the U.N.

"Withholding our share is in direct violation of the U.N. charter," he said. "When the Soviet Union in the early 1960s withheld its share to protest the U.N. peacekeeping mission in the Congo, the United States

led a vehement attack on the Soviets and hauled them into World Court."

Brooks said the U.N. has undergone many changes in the last 40 years, and the United States' role has weakened considerably during that time. The number of nations in the U.N. has grown from the original 51 to 159.

"The average number of countries voting with us on issues is 24 percent," he said, "ranging from Israel at 90 percent to Libya at 5 percent."

But even though the United States may have to vote alone, it won't change its policies to accommodate other member nations, he said.

"We have no delusions about the future of the U.S. in the U.N.," he said. "It is a basically unfriendly, inhospitable environment where we are frequently on the defensive."

## Gulf State Utilities seeks another rise in electricity rates

By Christi Daugherty  
Staff Writer

Gulf States Utilities, still struggling to keep its head above water, has gone once more to the Public Utility Commission seeking a lifeline from its Texas customers.

Doug McCormack, a spokesman for GSU, said the company asked for \$82 million as an emergency rate increase, but last week was given less than half of what it wanted.

The PUC granted a \$39.9 million increase for retail customers, which McCormack said would hold the company until summer, when they will plead their case for a larger and more permanent increase.

This rate change will not affect College Station utility customers, since the city buys its electricity wholesale and sells it back to its residents. These wholesale rates are regulated by the federal government.

Meanwhile, GSU is appealing a decision by the Louisiana Public Service Committee to reject their request for a rate increase.

College Station's utility rates increased 7 percent in September, and the city is still negotiating a contract which would determine its rates through 1991.

King Cole, College Station city manager, said the city has been negotiating with GSU since September, attempting to finalize a contract which would include small rate increases totaling about 3 percent over the next four years.

"The contract has been submitted to the regulatory commission for review," Cole said. "I don't anticipate any trouble. When both sides agree

like this, there are rarely any problems getting approval."

North Bardell is executive director of the Lone Star Municipal Power Agency, which is the organization of all the municipalities in Texas that buy their electricity wholesale from GSU. LSMPA includes College Station, Caldwell, Kirbyville and Newton.

Bardell said the contract has taken

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## Rental properties 'bright spot' in real estate

By Olivier Uytendaele  
Senior Staff Writer

The occupancy rate for rental properties has been on the rise for the past few years — a condition one local real estate expert called a "bright spot" in the otherwise bleak real estate market here.

In 1986, 92 percent of the apartments in the Bryan and College Station areas were occupied, James Conner Smith, president of Brazosland Appraisals, said Thursday at the Brazos Valley Economic Outlook Conference. As recently as 1982, only 82 percent of local apartments were occupied, he said.

Smith attributes the rise to the growth of Texas A&M University in the past year.

Although the rising occupancy rate may eventually translate into higher rents, for now rents average about 25 percent lower than in the early 1980s, he said. For example, the average two-bedroom apartment today rents for

\$306, whereas five or six years ago it would have rented for \$395, he said.

Over the next couple of years, however, Smith predicts the local real estate market will remain much as it has since 1983 — overbuilt and undervalued.

The surplus of office space constitutes the bleakest part of the real estate market. The Bryan-College Station area has added about 1

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million square feet of office space since 1980, mostly in the early years of the decade, he said. But today, only 66 percent of area office space is occupied — down from 94 percent in 1981, he said.

What's more, office rental rates were lower in 1986 than they were in 1985, he said.

Shopping centers have fared little better than office buildings, although the larger and better-placed shopping centers have actually

seen increasing occupancy rates at the expense of smaller and less strategically located centers, he said.

For example, shopping centers in the University Drive and Harvey Road areas, including Post Oak Mall, have an 80 percent occupancy rate and have shown "healthy growth overall," Smith said.

The occupancy rate for shopping centers in the Briarcrest area, on the other hand, declined to 67 percent last year, and the rate on the Southwest Parkway declined to 62 percent, he said.

In the new home market, Smith said certain conditions lead him to believe that the market is getting back to normal following the huge surplus of homes Bryan and College Station have had in recent years.

Only 205 new homes were constructed in the Bryan-College Station area in 1986 — the lowest number ever since 1974, Smith said.

## Texans debate raising speed limit to 65

By Amy Couvillon  
Staff Writer

Does 55 really save lives? As Congress prepares to consider raising the speed limit to 65 on certain roads, Texas researchers and lawmakers continue to debate the pros and cons of higher speeds.

"If you raise the speed limit and people begin traveling at higher rates of speed, you are going to experience more fatalities," says Dr. Quinn Brackett, an A&M research specialist at the Texas Transportation Institute. "I don't think there's any disagreement among researchers that the 55 mph speed limit has resulted in life-saving."

Tacked on to a highway and mass transit bill passed in the Senate Feb. 4 is an amendment that would raise the speed limit on rural interstates to 65 mph.

The highway bill will give states federal funds to pay for mainte-



nance and construction for their highway systems for this fiscal year, Brackett says.

"There is a lot of pressure from the states to get that spending bill out of Congress," he says. "The states need that money."

Brackett says the Senate, where the bill passed overwhelmingly, is trying to press the speed limit issue by attaching it to the spending bill.

But the bill still faces opposition in the conference committee, where the House and Senate versions of the bill must be reconciled.

"Something's going to have to give here, and it's going to have to give pretty soon," Brackett says. "Either they're going to pass the spending bill without amendments . . . or someone's going to have to compromise on the 65 business."

Both Texas senators voted to allow states to raise the speed limit. Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, who wrote the Senate bill, has said the accident argument is overstated.

"Only 4 percent of fatalities occur on rural interstates," Gramm told the *Houston Post* on Feb. 5.

Gramm also argues that many motorists are already going 65 mph, and the only effect of the proposed bill would be that many drivers would no longer be breaking the law.

Brent Boultinghouse, Washington press secretary to Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, agrees. He says the states should have the right to set their own speed limits.

"In states like Texas where you do have large stretches of rural interstate," Boultinghouse says, "normal law-abiding citizens in every other aspect are being made criminals, simply because the interstates do provide them with the ability to drive 65 mph. And the federal government is saying, 'No, this is not something that you should be doing.'"

Boultinghouse compares the situation to the federal government's raising of the drinking age to 21 last year.

"The basic argument is individual choice of the states," he says. "The federal government does not have a right to come in here and (threaten to cut off highway funds.) What

they're doing right now is blackmailing the states."

On the other side of the fence, highway researchers opposed to the speed limit hike argue that if you give drivers an inch, they'll take a mile. In other words, Brackett says, if they're given 65 mph, they'll take 75 mph.

"People in general tend to drive faster than the speed limit — at least a certain proportion," Brackett says.

"We've got almost 30 percent exceeding 65 now, when the speed limit is 55," he says. "It doesn't take a whole lot to extrapolate that this proportion will be exceeding 75 (if the limit is raised)."

Another argument is that drivers will become so accustomed to driving faster on the controlled access highways that they may also drive faster on roads not designed for

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