

State and Local

Court orders inquiry into 13 state schools

Charges allege abuse of mentally retarded

DALLAS (AP) — Texas' 13 state schools for the mentally retarded were ordered by a federal judge Wednesday to cooperate in an investigation of charges of abuse alleged by lawyers for residents at the schools.

Lawyers in a settled class-action suit had called for the investigation amid reports of abuse and numerous deaths at the schools.

Plaintiffs' lawyer David Ferleger of Philadelphia said he now plans to ask the judge to put a cap on admissions to state schools for the retarded.

"Because otherwise, more people will be subjected to the same awful conditions, which already violates the court's orders," Ferleger said.

U.S. District Judge Barefoot Sanders ordered the institutions to provide information on all allegations of neglect, abuse, lack of safety or harm to clients.

Ferleger predicted the Legis-

lature, faced with a court order that could cost the state millions of dollars, will close at least two state schools and move the clients to community homes.

"The retarded are not dangerous," he said. "They have committed no crime and they are suffering being locked up in these institutions. Maybe a contempt citation will wake everyone up."

In a second court order, Sanders also instructed court monitor Linda O'Neall to do a new review of conditions at the Fort Worth State School by June 1.

"That's the school at which the plaintiffs have made some fairly serious complaints about abuse," O'Neall said from her Tallahassee, Fla., office. "There are some deaths we will look into, I think the judge is just responding to what's before him at this point."

The Dallas Morning News reported Sunday there were as many

as 45 deaths at the 13 schools statewide. One of the cases included a 16-year-old Fort Worth State School resident who swallowed a rubber glove, wire and bolts and then died from surgical complications.

Ten of the 45 deaths occurred at the state schools in Fort Worth, Austin and Denton during a three-month period, according to the most recent quarterly report provided to the court by the schools.

O'Neall said she did not know which deaths she will investigate. "I need to get with some of the consultants I'll use before designing completely what the review will consist of," O'Neall said.

Kent Johnson, an attorney for the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, said he could not comment on Sanders' orders because he had not read them.

Judge freezes defendants' assets in failed savings and loan lawsuit

DALLAS (AP) — A federal judge Wednesday froze the assets of six defendants in a lawsuit that claims officers of the failed Vernon Savings and Loan Association exploited the thrift for their personal gain.

The Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corp. on Monday filed a suit seeking more than \$350 million in damages from six former officers and a major investor of the thrift.

The suit alleged the defendants fraudulently caused Vernon to grossly overstate its profits and net worth in order to pay \$22.1 million in illegal dividends to Dondi Financial Corp., a holding company headed by Dallas developer Don Dixon.

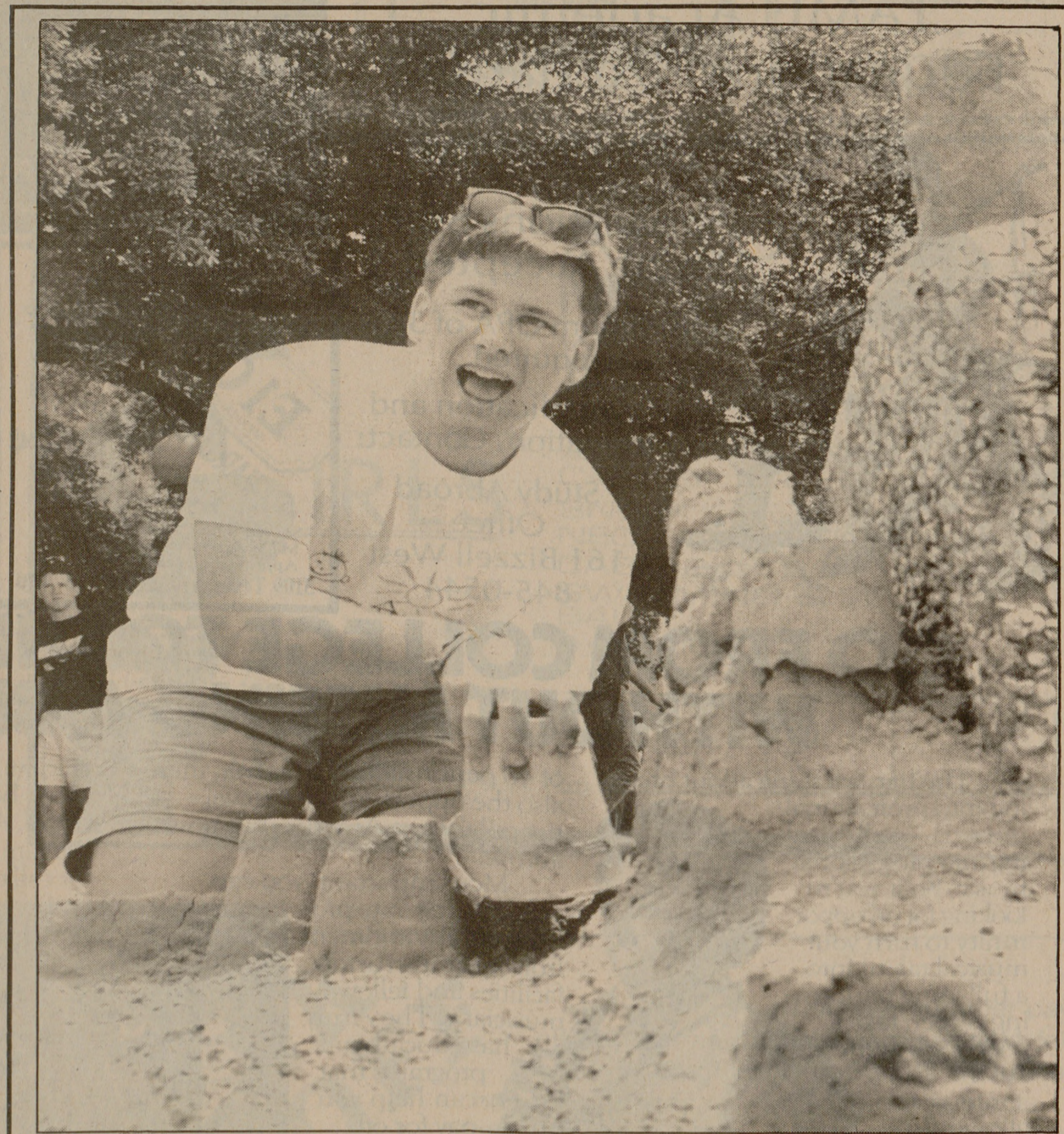
After Dondi acquired more than 90 percent of Vernon's stock in 1982, the FSLIC alleged, the top officials "began to loot Vernon for their personal financial benefit and

defraud its depositors, creditors and the FSLIC."

The FSLIC did not specify damages but said it would seek at least \$350 million, the amount of insolvency when the thrift was closed March 20.

U.S. District Judge Joe Fish froze the personal assets of the six former officers, acting on a motion by the FSLIC attorneys.

"The assets of six of the individuals were frozen, with the exception of Don Dixon, because he's involved in bankruptcy proceedings in California," said Andrea Plater, a Federal Home Loan Bank Board spokesman in Washington.



Sandman

Jim Bradbury, chairman of MSC Recreation, creates his own castle Wednesday in front of the Chemistry Building. The committee sponsored a three-hour castle-building contest, in which a team

of five students won the most creative and best overall categories. All winners received T-shirts commemorating the event. Grounds maintenance workers removed the sand after the contest.

Photo by Sarah B. Cowan

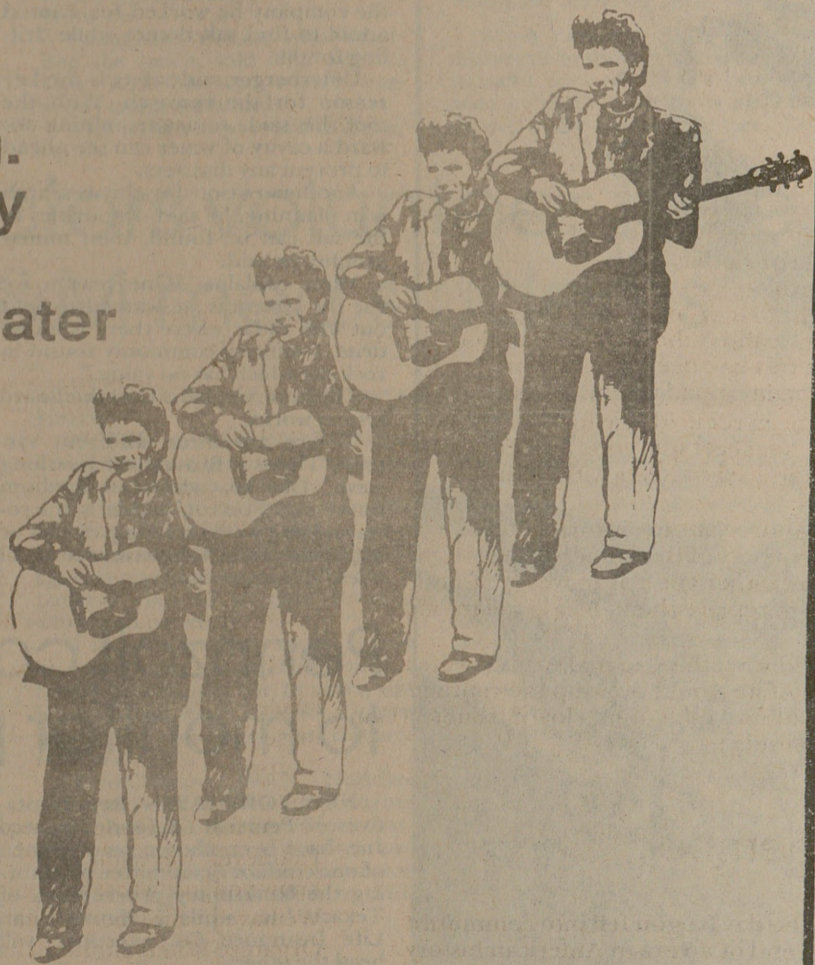
Correction

A story in Tuesday's issue of *The Battalion* misspelled the name of a registered nurse at the A.P. Beutel Health Center as Cindy Bergenbeck. The proper spelling is Cindy Bergenback.

MSC Town Hall and AIAS presents

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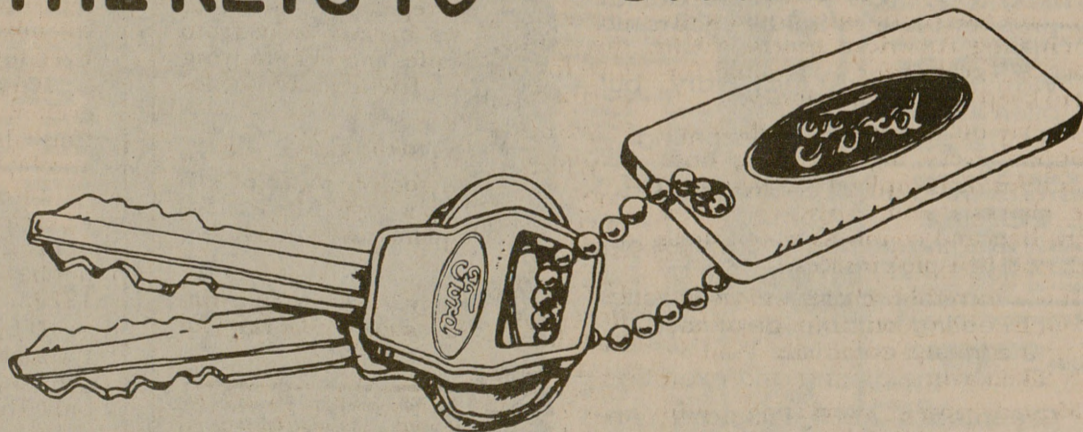
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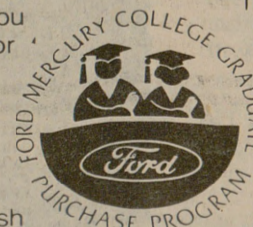
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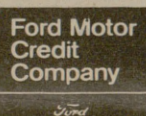
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