



Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

## Headin' For Home

One of the participants in this week's Texas A&M baseball camp rounds second base during drills designed to teach the players to watch the third base

coach. Three one-week camps are held during the summer. The 80 participants in this week's camp range in age from 9 to 12.

## Airport uses old materials for new runway

HOUSTON (AP) — Engineers putting the finishing touches on a new runway at Houston Intercontinental Airport are using ancient roadbuilding materials to upgrade Texas' second-busiest airport.

The \$65 million project, to be inaugurated Friday when top Houston city officials make a ceremonial landing in a jetliner, is a variation of the same technique the Romans used about 2,000 years ago to build roads still in use today, said Alan Jeffs, design manager for the new Runway 9-27.

"As an engineer, this is an old technology being applied to a new system," Jeffs said.

The 10,000-foot runway is unlike conventional airport runways in that contractors shunned the use of concrete and instead used natural materials found in the area.

"The unique feature is it is extremely cost effective," Jeffs said. Savings of up to \$10 million in runway expenses allowed the city to build a highway interchange and a new airport fire station essentially for free. And they still had money left over.

The local materials included gravel from the nearby San Jacinto River, sand from land just north of the airport, lime that is readily available in the Houston area and flyash produced from a Houston Lighting & Power Co. generating plant. The Romans used gravel, sand, lime and volcanic ash.

"It's probably one of the oldest processes," Jeffs said. "We use the example of the Romans and the Appian Way. They were using natural materials they found and built roads out of it."

Houston engineers added a small amount of cement to the mixture, known as LCF (lime-concrete-flyash) but only so it could be hard enough initially to carry construction equipment.

"It's going to get stronger and stronger and stronger," he said. "In reality, this thing will last as long as the airport is here."

Only two other airports — Newark, N.J. and Portland, Ore. — have used LCF. Sample cores pulled by engineers from the Newark runway, now in use for more than 15 years, show it is continuing to gain strength.

## Expert: Rain will increase population of disease-carrying Asian mosquitoes

By Teresa Foster  
Reporter

The heavy rains that already have deluged Texas with floods and humidity also are expected to increase the population of Asian mosquitoes, which are carriers of the dengue virus.

Dr. Jim Olson, professor of entomology at Texas A&M, said dengue is a flu-like virus that originated in Africa in the colonial era. A resurgence of the virus is occurring in Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean area.

Although the virus hasn't been reported in the United States, public health concern centers around the possibility of dengue establishing itself in this country through the Asian mosquitoes, Olson said.

But Olson said the local area won't be affected as much as other parts of the state. Houston and coastal areas will be the hardest hit, he said.

The dengue virus, also known as "break-bone

fever," is like a severe case of the flu, said David Jefferson, a sanitarian at the Brazos County Health Department.

"It hurts deep down in your bones," he said.

The virus causes a fever that lasts five to seven days and often occurs in separate periods of three- or four-day durations, he said. Recovery from the virus is associated with prolonged fatigue and depression, he said.

Olson said tourists and immigrants who are infected with dengue while in the United States may expose themselves to the mosquitoes, which pick up and spread the virus.

Asian mosquitoes lay their eggs out of water in places such as old tires, he said. When rain floods the tires, the mosquitoes hatch.

The mosquitoes probably were brought to Texas in imported Asian tires, he said, and these tires, which may be transported throughout the country, potentially carry eggs.

Since the Asian mosquito was first discovered

in the United States two years ago in Harris County, the species has spread to more than 11 states. The insect has been found as far north as Tennessee and has the ability to spread farther and live in colder temperatures than most mosquitoes, Olson said. This trait strengthens the potential for dengue in the United States, he said.

Other types of mosquitoes, such as Aedes mosquitoes, also may carry the virus, Jefferson said, but they can't survive in cold areas.

Olson said the best protection against the Asian mosquito is to dispose of or empty anything that holds water when it rains.

"Since they breed in refuse, get rid of the refuse," he said.

The Center for Disease Control is the lead agency researching the mosquito's activity, along with several universities and mosquito control districts.

Currently, little is known about the survival or the activities of the mosquito, Olson said.

## Defense rests case for officer in murder trial

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Attorneys for a patrolman charged with slaying a fellow officer rested their case Thursday without calling the defendant to the stand, saying the state did not prove its case.

Farrell Tucker, 36, is charged with killing his best friend, Stephen Smith, 31, last Aug. 18. Tucker claims Smith was holding a .45-caliber pistol on him and that he had to shoot Smith in self-defense with a .357-caliber Magnum revolver.

After a noon recess, prosecutors and defense attorneys gathered for a conference in the chambers of State District Judge Phil Chavarria Jr. Tucker's attorney, Terry McDonald, rested the defense's case shortly afterwards.

"I just don't believe a jury's going to believe beyond a reasonable doubt that Farrell Tucker went out there and intentionally murdered Stephen Smith," he said.

Special prosecutor Sid Harle, however, disagreed. "I'm satisfied with the case," he said. "As far as showing an intentional killing, there's no question about it."

The jury will return at 9 a.m. Friday for closing arguments.

If convicted, Tucker could be sentenced to up to life in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

## Meter readers fight dogs, insects as part of normal work conditions

ODESSA (AP) — Cathy Wallace swiftly moved from house to house through fields of weeds and swarming hordes of insects.

The TU Electric meter reader calmly stopped at one south-side residence to console Butch, an unchained dog that was barking and snarling.

For Wallace, it's all in a day's work that involves more than recording electricity meter readings.

Sometimes "you gotta tough it out," she says.

Wallace carries a small computer terminal used to record the readings, and her only defense against vicious animals, rough customers and locked gates is a telescope. With the scope, Wallace can read hard-to-reach meters from long distances.

She said the job took some getting used to at first but now she feels lucky to have it.

Wallace, with the 10 other readers who work for TU Electric, begins work at 7 each morning to beat the heat of the day.

She has been at her job for two years, she said, and finds the extensive miles of walking most difficult when it is too hot or too cold.

"Other than that, it keeps you in shape," she said.

Wallace also likes the idea that the company provides her work pants — the dog bites and trudging through mazes of mud and weeds can take their toll on clothes.

"There was one time it was raining all day long," she said.

On one occasion, a meter had to be read at a house with a large German shepherd that was bent on getting out of the yard.

The dog ran over Wallace in its attempt to escape.

"It was like a mud wrestling contest," she said, "but I finally got him back in the yard."

"Then you have all the dogs in the neighborhood barking at you at once. That can be a real headache." Wallace says human beings can be just as dangerous as any animal.

*"My feet will tell you. We read all the meters. We have to pay our bill, too. We want our meter read right..."*

— Cathy Wallace, meter reader

"I had a gun pulled on me once," she said, adding that such things hardly ever happen.

She said the gun-toting customer had been robbed three times and advised her to identify herself next time she needed to read the meter.

Wallace also wants to set the record straight on whether meters are read every month.

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