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First AIDS hospital in U.S. prepares to close doors

HOUSTON (AP) — Rather than celebrate its first anniversary looking to new developments, the nation's first AIDS hospital will be working to salvage research and treatment programs as it prepares to close.

"We have done everything we can think of," said Dr. Peter Mansell, medical director of the Institute for Immunological Disorders. "I don't know where to go next."

The hospital opened Sept. 2, 1986. Mounting financial losses caused the hospital to lay off staff in March and stop accepting indigent patients. On Aug. 6, the hospital announced it would close within a year.

The hospital is owned by the for-profit firm of American Medical International and is staffed by the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute.

As operations at the facility wind down, Mansell said he and other administrators are trying to save a \$5.8 million contract from National Institutes of Health designating the institute as one of 19 facilities around the country for testing experimental treatments.

If the contract is not renewed in June, AIDS patients in Houston would be hundreds of miles from facilities

offering the latest treatments for the as-yet incurable disease. Houston has the fourth-largest number of AIDS cases in the nation.

Patients who have signed up to take part in experimental drug tests in Houston may have to travel to other cities if the contract is lost, Dr. Gary Brown, the institute said.

"People on the protocols might have the option to transfer to Tulane (in New Orleans) or Miami (in Miami, Fla.)," he said. "That is the distance they would have to go to get into an ATEU protocol."

ATEU stands for AIDS Treatment Evaluation Unit, the name given centers where experimental treatments are administered.

Mansell said the financial decline of the institute is due to several factors, among them poor cooperation from private physicians and lack of an effective fundraising campaign.

"For all the things AMI didn't do, it did do some things," Mansell said. "No one else in the country operates a hospital like this. Its motives might have been noble and its methods not ideal, but it opened the door. It just didn't work."

Earthquake simulator tests may tighten building codes

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — An earthquake simulator that evolved through research for NASA's space program may convince officials in earthquake-prone areas like Mexico City to strengthen building code regulations, researchers say.

Mexico City is still trying to rebuild from two devastating earthquakes in September 1985 that crumpled hundreds of buildings and killed thousands of people.

There were reports that some of the fallen structures were poorly designed and did not meet construction codes.

"Masonry by itself is a very poor earthquake-resistant design and most times in earthquakes all over the world, where you hear about damage being incurred, it's usually in strict masonry construction," said Dr. Dan Kana, a Southwest Research Institute engineer.

He said steel is needed to bolster the construction, and reports from Mexico City showed many buildings there did not use steel.

earthquakes began about 15 years ago when NASA wanted to know the effects of earthquakes on liquid containers.

Kana said liquid fuel accounts for a large percentage of the total weight of a space vehicle at liftoff

"What we would like to be able to do is take scale models of such foundations and study them under simulated earthquake conditions in the laboratory and predict what those foundations will do."

— Dr. Dan Kana, a Southwest Research Institute engineer

the impact of a quake on a building. Kana said the design had geometrical and dynamical properties to test the motion of soil surface.

"That's the problem of from full-scale to subscale," Kana said. "You just don't make it look just like the full-scale, but it's the dynamic properties you're interested in."

The box of soil implanted tubes is placed on an earthquake simulator, which shakes the soil and measures the vertical and horizontal effects on the tubes.

The results of the experiment should be available later this year, Kana said.

"What we would like to be able to do is take scale models of such foundations and study them under simulated earthquake conditions in the laboratory and predict what those foundations will do," Kana said. "Obviously you cannot simulate an earthquake in full scale."

"By such studies the final product would be recommendations on building codes that would be followed in such earthquake areas."

"Those codes, of course, are in Mexico City, but were not followed and that's when the earthquake occurred."

With the help of \$200,000 from the National Science Foundation, researchers, including professors and students from the University of Texas at San Antonio, are trying to simulate an earthquake in the Houston area.

Such an occurrence is highly unlikely, Kana noted.

The institute's research into

and the fuel sloshes around, disturbing the vehicle.

The institute simulated those effects and as well as tremors on scale models of other liquid-storage facilities, including petrochemical and nuclear plants, Kana said.

The current earthquake simulator uses 30-inch miniature plastic replicas of 50-foot vertical steel piles planted in a box of soil to determine

Officials in Mexico plan to draw tourists with newest ocean resort

SANTA MARIA HUATULCO, Mexico (AP) — Cows and donkeys still graze by the runways that will open to commercial flights late this year for the start of what the government hopes will be Mexico's next successful ocean resort.

Planners for the Bays of Huatulco hope to avoid the mistakes that have marked such successful ventures as Cancun on the tip of the Yucatan peninsula and Ixtapa on the Pacific north of Acapulco.

"This is this administration's most important tourism project," Manuel Alonso, spokesman for President Miguel de la Madrid, said during a weekend tour of the project on the southern state of Oaxaca's Pacific coast. "One billion pesos (about \$670,000 at current exchange rates) have been invested already."

De la Madrid, whose six-year term ends in late 1988, toured the area and dedicated everything from waste treatment facilities to the first hotel open for business to taxi concessions on Saturday.

Unlike Cancun and Ixtapa, where four- and five-star hotels generally priced out of reach of Mexican vacationers were built in homogeneous

strips, the Bays of Huatulco will have a mix of moderate and expensive hotels stretched out over nine bays.

Officials also were careful to point out that plans are for the resort to serve as a new market to spur agricultural development in impoverished Oaxaca. Cancun, by contrast, largely is supplied by wholesale markets from as far away as Mexico City.

De la Madrid in a speech at La Crucecita, the first town rapidly springing up for workers from the resort, said, "We do not want an enclave of progress and of boom surrounded by misery."

Projections are that 146,000 tourists will visit Huatulco, almost all of them Mexicans, next year. The figure will rise to 680,000 by the year 2000, about two-thirds of them Mexican and one-third foreigners.

De la Madrid dedicated the small Hotel Posada Binniguenda, the first open for business. It is not located on the beach itself.

The Club Med with 500 rooms and the Hotel Sheraton with 368 rooms, both five-star hotels and directly on the beach, are scheduled to open this winter.

The view from the plane as it descends into the nine bays area is spectacular, lush lines of deserted beaches and lush jungle spreading inland.

Some of the campesinos who live in the areas objected to government expropriation and development plans.

De la Madrid said Saturday only nine expropriation cases remain to be settled out of more than 1,000 and that 55 of 265 related cases still are pending.

"The government offers justice for those pending cases the government also desires those pending cases it be known the interest of the majority is more highly than the interest of the minority," he said.

Tourism Secretary Antonio Quez Savignac said on Aug. 27 the target of 5 million foreign tourists for 1987 to Mexico will be passed and that tourism will bring in \$1.95 billion in foreign exchange by the end of the year.

Tourism vies with the "tourism" or twin-plant, assembly industry as the No. 2 source of foreign change for Mexico after petroleum.

Grayson County college student builds clocks for tuition, pleasure

PRESTON BEND (AP) — To find the future, Lewis Lafas reached back to the past.

Lafas, 34, plans to study electrical engineering at Grayson County College this fall. In order to help pay his way through school, he is building and selling clocks that are made entirely of wood.

The art of building all-wood clocks wound down about a century ago with the development of brass gears, he said.

Reinventing the all-wood clock meant two years of hair-pulling problems interspersed with jump-up-and-down joy.

Problems ranged from developing a design for an all-wood clock to finding a way to turn 3/4-inch thick chunks of maple into precise, long-lasting gears.

Lefas works as a freelance plumber-electrician-repairman, and investing \$2,000 in tools and material for the project took a large chunk out of his family's finances.

Plus, he commandeered one of their mobile home's two bedrooms for a workshop, squeezing wife Ann, daughter Amy, 3, and son Phillip, 8 months, into less space.

Lefas' timepiece is about the size of a traditional grandfather clock, but without a case. The inner works are open to view.

"In most clocks, you can see the hands move and that's it," he says. "But here, this clock actually shows you how time is measured; the interaction of the timekeeping machinery."

A 20-pound weight pulls that swings a wooden pendulum connected to a wooden escapement that regulates wooden hands that turn wooden numbers.

"These clocks aren't made for people," he says. "They're made for me."

"It's a functional artwork to see one of my clocks in a home someday."

For now, Lafas hopes the clocks will help pay his way through college. He would like to eventually build biomedical devices.

But he says he will always be a clock builder. "I'll be doing this until I'm 80," he says.

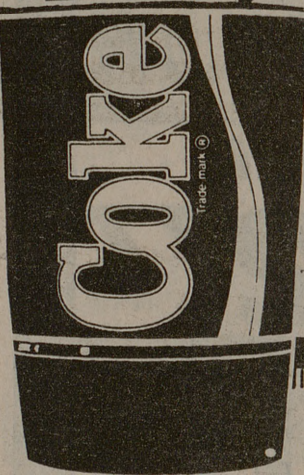
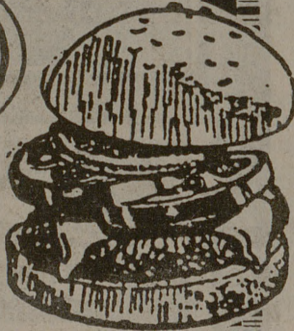
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