

State and Local

Texas A&M professor prepares beach pollution documentary

By Alan Sembera
Reporter

Garbage on Texas beaches is the topic of a documentary being prepared for the Texas A&M Sea Grant College Program by Dr. Don Tomlinson, an A&M assistant journalism professor. The program will be completed by the end of this month and will be offered to PBS, Tomlinson said.

The 90-minute program reveals the causes of the beach pollution problem and deals with possible solutions, such as the international marine pollution treaty, which involves ships' use of oceans, and the local Adopt-A-Beach program, he said.

Adopt-A-Beach is a beach cleanup program run by the Texas General Land Office. It uses the same idea as the Texas Highway Department's Adopt-A-Highway program.

Tomlinson said garbage has become a greater problem in recent years because of the increased use of plastic. Plastic isn't biodegradable, he said, and lasts well beyond anyone's lifetime.

Tomlinson traveled to beaches from Florida to Brownsville. He said Texas beaches had the most garbage.

"The reason plastic finds its way to Texas shores, as opposed to other shores on the Gulf of Mexico — and ours are far dirtier than any other coastal area in the Gulf — is the wind and surface currents," he said.

"The wind and surface currents are such that this stuff basically ends up on Padre and Mustang islands —

and even as far up as Galveston, as opposed to Louisiana, Alabama and Florida.

"It makes our situation a lot worse than the situation in those other states. That's why we're addressing the problem with greater fervor, I suppose, than the other states are."

Most people concerned with this problem believe the marine pollution treaty, or MARPOL, will help

sioner Garry Mauro, a 1970 A&M graduate, has been working with a congressional delegation from Texas in Washington D.C. to get the annex ratified. Osio expects ratification this year. It would take two years after ratification for the annex to take effect, he said.

He added that the office is trying to have the treaty changed to designate the Gulf a "special area."

"The reason plastic finds its way to Texas shores, as opposed to other shores on the Gulf of Mexico — and ours are far dirtier than any other coastal area in the Gulf — is the wind and surface currents."

— A&M assistant professor Don Tomlinson

solve this problem, Tomlinson said. Although MARPOL has been in existence for some time, it does not prohibit dumping plastic. If Annex V of the treaty is passed, dumping plastic into water anywhere in the world will be prohibited.

Ralph Osio, who works in the public information office of the General Land Office, said Annex V ratifications in other countries, including the Soviet Union, bring the total votes to 47 percent.

He said the United States' ratification would put the number of votes over the required 50 percent necessary for the annex to go into effect.

Osio said Texas Land Commis-

A special-area designation means the Gulf would be considered an enclosed basin and no dumping would be allowed, he said.

Bodies of water that are considered special areas now include the Baltic Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea.

Tomlinson said that although the Gulf isn't a completely enclosed basin it should be given a special-area designation for the purposes of the treaty.

"Things that are dumped into the Gulf of Mexico can only leave the Gulf through the Straits of Florida, and that's such a narrow passage in comparison to the Gulf itself," he said.

"Because of winds, surface currents and eddies, garbage gets down there but bottles up and comes back the other way. It basically ends up on our shores."

Tomlinson said he knew very little about the beach garbage program when he started shooting in May.

"I very quickly learned, however, that the problem was a huge problem and a very, very complicated problem," Tomlinson said.

"Our initial thoughts were to do something related to Adopt-A-Beach, but very quickly we saw that it would be way too limited a perspective of this problem."

"So we undertook to discover the various persons and institutions who have been researching the problem, and once we talked to those people, we got them to tell us who, in their opinion, were the perpetrators."

Tomlinson said he found the garbage was being produced by several groups. The major groups, he said, are the shipping industry, the offshore oil and gas industry, the commercial shrimping industry, recreational fishermen, recreational boaters and beachgoers.

Tomlinson said he talked to representatives of all the industries.

"They all believe they are part of the problem," he said. "None of them believe they are as much a part of the problem as the scientists would have us believe."

"The bottom line is, the trash is coming from somewhere. The question is: What do we do to keep it from happening?"

Death row inmate hopes for third trial to clear charges

CONROE (AP) — Clarence Brandley returns Monday to the courthouse where six years ago he was sentenced to death for the rape-slaying of a high school student.

Brandley, who turns 36 this week, is hoping for a third trial to get him off death row and prove he did not kill 16-year-old Cheryl Ferguson.

The case has triggered allegations of racial discrimination and demonstrations by Brandley supporters that the only reason he was convicted and sentenced to death was because he is black and the victim was white.

Defense attorneys, who already have succeeded in getting a visiting judge assigned to the case, also want this week's evidentiary hearing moved from Montgomery County, contending Brandley can't get a fair hearing in the county directly north of Houston.

County prosecutors have said they would oppose such a request. Brandley was one of several janitors working at Conroe High School Aug. 23, 1980 when Ferguson was raped and strangled.

He was the only black man among them, however, and his attorneys contend he was singled out because of his race.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in July granted this week's hearing, saying issues raised by defense attorneys three months earlier should be reviewed in court. A key issue is a claim that statements from two former janitors — fellow workers — should clear Brandley.

Last week, Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox said a months-long inquiry of the case by his office determined that any new evidence uncovered was inconclusive as to Brandley's guilt or innocence.

Mattox refused to release the actual report except to prosecutors and defense attorneys.

"Some new evidence was found, but it would not be considered clear and convincing evidence of Mr. Brandley's guilt or innocence," Mattox said.

The attorney general did say he favored moving the case out of Montgomery County.

Brandley was convicted by an all-white jury on circumstantial evidence, Brandley's attorneys said. Defense attorneys insist prosecutors never pursued leads that would have cleared him.

Brandley, who in recent weeks has declined requests for interviews on death row, has said in the past he was skeptical of the Mattox probe, calling it a smoke-screen.

"They all work together," he said. "This whole ordeal is that no one wants to admit that what happened was wrong."

Brandley has had two execution dates, both of them stayed.

"I don't have anything to hide," he said. "I'd much rather be retried. I think there's still a lot of doubt in many people's minds."

Ferguson was manager of the Belleville High School volleyball team, which traveled 60 miles to Conroe for a Saturday morning scrimmage. She was noticed missing shortly after the team arrived.

Two hours later, she was found dead.

He was arrested within a week and charged with her slaying. His first trial ended in a hung jury, 11-1 for conviction, with the lone dissenter opposed to the death penalty. A second jury deliberated 85 minutes before convicting him and took 65 minutes to decide he should be put to death.

Police recapture four inmates after escape

TENNESSEE COLONY (AP) — Four inmates attacked a guard and fled the Coffield Unit in his car early Sunday, but the prisoners were recaptured about an hour later, a spokesman said.

The four managed to escape by leaving their work area inside the prison.

The four men climbed a fence and entered a staff living area where they assaulted a guard,

Texas Department of Corrections spokesman Charles Brown said.

The inmates took the guard's wallet and car keys and fled in his vehicle at about 6 a.m., Brown said. The attacked officer suffered mostly bruises in the attack, he said.

All four inmates were recaptured at about 7:15 a.m. near Buffalo about 30 miles from the

prison unit by authorities from Anderson and Leon counties, he said.

Brown said he believed the car had been wrecked, but no injuries were reported in the incident.

The inmates recaptured were Roderick Davis, 23; John Henry Jackson, 31; Curtis Bernard Johnson, 23; and Richard Louis Morris Jr., 22.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WE'RE SURE YOU WOULD LIKE ANSWERED ABOUT THE SCOTT & WHITE HEALTH PLAN

- Question:** Will I have a personal physician if I sign up with the Scott & White Health Plan?
- Answer:** Yes. Our health plan members will choose their own personal physician from our primary care staff, including Family Practice, Internal Medicine, or Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine for your children. Should you choose a personal physician, and then desire to change, you may certainly do so. If you need assistance selecting a personal physician call your local Scott & White Health Plan office at 268-3309.
- Question:** Will the Scott & White Health Plan cover my prescription drugs?
- Answer:** Yes. Your take home prescription drugs prescribed by your Scott & White physician are covered. Each member will have a \$25.00 deductible with prescription drugs. After the deductible is met, the SWHP will reimburse each member for eighty percent of their prescription drug charges up to a health plan payment of \$500.00.
- Question:** Will the Scott & White Health Plan cover routine physical checkups, well-baby care eye exams?
- Answer:** Yes. The Scott & White Health Plan covers 100 percent with no deductible such preventive health practices as routine physicals, prenatal checkups, eye exams, hearing tests, and well-baby checkups.
- Question:** Will the Scott & White Health Plan pay for services out of this area?
- Answer:** Yes. If you are out of town you and your family are covered for all medical emergencies. In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency room and get treatment. The Scott & White Health Plan will pick up 100 percent of your benefits after a \$20.00 co-payment.
- Remember to please contact your local health plan office within 48 hours so that they may begin making payment arrangements.
- Question:** What about deductibles, claim forms, and out-of-pocket expenses with the Scott & White Health Plan?
- Answer:** There are no annual deductibles except with prescription drugs, no claim forms for services provided by a Scott & White facility, and minimal out-of-pocket expenses with the Scott & White Health Plan.

IF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE LOOKING FOR A HIGH QUALITY HEALTH PLAN THEN THE SCOTT & WHITE HEALTH PLAN IS HERE FOR YOU!



SCOTT & WHITE HEALTH PLAN

A STATE CERTIFIED HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATION

YOU CAN COUNT ON US