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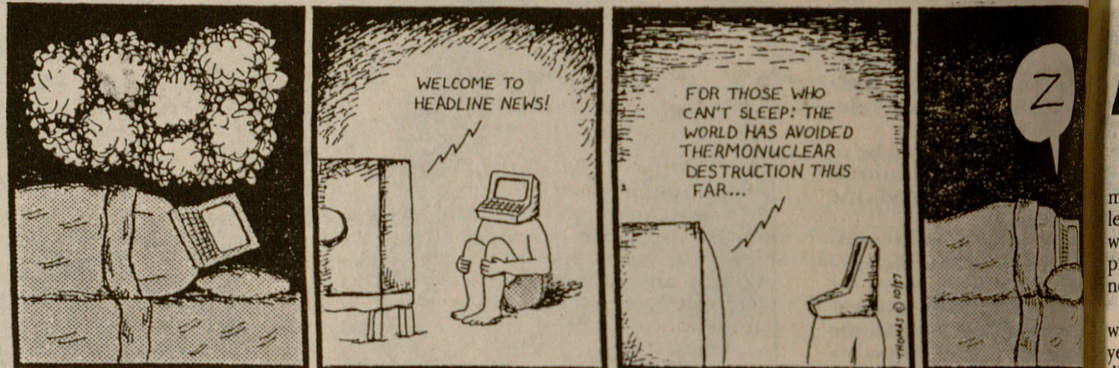
Warped

by Scott McCull



Waldo

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Jackson takes campaign to town on Mexican border

EDINBURG (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson took his presidential campaign to the Mexican border, describing its poverty Thursday as an "international disgrace" and saying a war with drug smugglers intensified there.

Jackson, 46, met with residents of a community located two miles north of the Mexican border called "La Frontera," and stopped along a cattle road at the plywood home of 73-year-old Placida Torres.

Residents told Jackson the neighborhood, known locally as a "colonia," was developed four years ago but did not obtain drinking water until March and remains without sewage connections.

"This is on the edge of national shame and international disgrace," Jackson said.

He greeted some of the 45 residents congregated at the Torres

home with a plywood sign reading, "Viva Rainbo (sic) Coalition."

State officials estimate that between 150,000 and 250,000 people in the southernmost part of Texas, known as the Rio Grande Valley, live in colonias. The colonias are usually rural, substandard subdivisions developed with inadequate utilities and drainage by real estate developers.

"This is a kind of little Ethiopia right here in our own face," Jackson said in the yard equipped with an outdoor toilet.

He said he intended to contact House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, Thursday to ask for a congressional hearing "to put some light on the situation."

Jackson also said colonias are "a byproduct of the lack of a housing policy."

While at the colonia, he is federal immigration policies. He is partially responsible for the poor Mexico and South Texas. He congratulated the Border Patrol for its efforts to stop drug and smuggling.

Efforts to stop drug smuggling should be as strong as those the government devotes to deterring allies against communism. He told Silvestre Reyes, the Border Patrol's chief patrol agent in McAllen Sector.

Reyes told Jackson that the number of drugs seized by agents in the sector since 1982 has increased a hundredfold, and that some are armed "with the latest weapons including hand grenades."

He said 38 percent of the drugs brought to the United States enter through South Texas.

Hydrologist: Hundreds of dangerous wells exist in Permian Basin

MIDLAND (AP) — Veiled by thick prairie grass, hundreds of abandoned wells like the one that trapped a toddler dot the oil-rich Permian Basin, and some property owners aren't even aware of them, a hydrologist said Thursday.

Neighborhood children said they occasionally threw rocks down the 8-inch abandoned water well casing that turned into a trap for 18-month-old Jessica McClure, whom rescue workers were still trying to free Thursday afternoon.

"What it does is call attention to the hazard, as well as the liability of these (old wells)," said Joe Reed, a Midland hydrologist and environmental consultant with Reed and Associates.

"There are many, many wells all over town," although no one knows a specific number of abandoned wells in the city, he said.

Reed said many old wells still have pumps inside their casings, but if the pumps have been removed, the casings should be capped with a welded steel plate or plugged with cement.

Under the Texas Water Well Drillers Act, landowners are responsible for plugging old wells with cement that haven't been used for six months or more, Mike Leach, investigator in Austin with the Water Well Drillers Board, said.

But enforcement of the law is generally left up to the landowner, and sometimes people buy land and are not aware of wells on their property, he said.

"That's why it's a big concern. I'm sure there's hundreds of holes out there that are just open and a lot of people don't even know they are on their land," Leach said.

Reed said during his 20 years as a hydrologist in Midland, he has rarely run into an 8-inch casing — water-well casings in the city are usually 4 to 6 inches in diameter.

"That's very unusual to find someone falling in something that small," Reed said. "It's not totally uncommon, but again it's something that's preventable."

Old water wells are abundant in Midland because during the 1940s and '50s, many homeowners tapped into the shallow High Plains aquifer underneath the city to irrigate their lawns and gardens, Reed said.

And Jessica's neighborhood was once known as rural Midland where wells may have been drilled to use as a primary source of water, Reed said.

Senior City Planner Becky Hamm said the neighborhood known as the Permian Estates was annexed into the city in 1952. Neighbor Maxine Sprague said the well where toddler Jessica McClure was trapped has not been used for 20 years.

Jessica's aunt, Jamie Moore and her husband, James, have rented the home at 3309 Tanner Drive, where the 8-inch well is located, since May, Sprague told the Midland Reporter-Telegram.

Study delays vote about nuclear plant

AUSTIN (AP) — A study whether it is economically feasible to build a new nuclear power plant in the state's Unit 2 is not expected until 1988, three years after the study was ordered by the Public Utility Commission, participants said Thursday.

A nine-day PUC hearing on the merits in the case Thursday with testimony from Paul Chernick, a nuclear expert hired by the Commission for Consumer Rate Review, and Houston-based group that opposes project cancellation.

Unit 2 of the two-unit, 2,200-Mw Agordo County nuclear power plant scheduled to begin construction in June 1988 by the Ham Painter of Houston-based Ham & Power Co., STNP's partner. Total cost of the plant is pegged at \$5.3 billion.

But Chernick said the PUC Unit 2 won't begin construction until March 1988. It will cost \$1.5 billion more than the current estimate.

"The basic problem is building a nuclear power plant is a very complicated process. Nuclear Regulatory Commission rules change over time."

"So many things can go wrong with a project that completion is not guaranteed," Administrative Law Judge Howard Fisher, who is conducting hearings in the case, said to make a recommendation. The three-member PUC Unit 2, PUC spokesman said.

El Paso water board to consider school's request for water hookups

EL PASO (AP) — An elementary school which has been without water since it opened may get help from the city's water board, which will consider bending its rules enough to help provide service to the institution.

Employees have had to truck in 10,000 gallons of water a day to Rojas Elementary School, east of here, since it opened last month. El Paso's Public Service Board has rules against extending service outside its city limits, and Socorro Independent School District built Rojas without water or sewage hookups.

Public Service Board members asked their attorney on Wednesday to draft an amendment to their rules that would allow the school district to tap a water line about a mile from the school.

Members said they would consider the proposed amendment Nov. 4.

The \$2.7 million school is in southeast El Paso's Lower Valley, an unplanned section with no dependable water supply.

Because of the unimproved conditions in the Lower Valley is inexpensive. The last decade's rapid growth, mostly from poor families, has outstripped their own houses. Many people buy water from the district does, and hope that someday they will have connections.

The Lower Valley Water District plans to issue a \$22.5 million bond election Nov. 14.

The school's water-hauling plan is not approved by the state Health Department, which has asked the school district to find a water supply by year-end.

Passage of the amendment would allow the school to tap into the water line and extend its own pipe.

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