

# Texas A&M The Battalion

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## Tornadoes rage across 200 miles of state

### From Staff and Wire Reports

Tornadoes stormed a path of more than 200 miles through east-central Texas on Sunday, killing at least nine people, injuring at least 132 others and toppling scores of mobile homes, barns, homes, buildings and power lines.

The carnage began before noon at Jarrell, a small town on Interstate 35 about 50 miles northeast of Austin, where a 6-year-old boy was slightly injured when a tornado touched down.

About 12:15 p.m., Janet Eagleton, 54, of Sugarland, and her daughter,

Carol Skotnik, 27, of Bryan, were killed when a twister hit 60 miles southeast of Jarrell at Caldwell, cutting a 16-mile path of destruction through Burleson County, said Beverly Mahlmann, administrator of the Burleson County Hospital.

Shortly after 2 p.m., two people were killed in Normangee, about 50 miles northeast of Caldwell, when a tornado touched down, said Margaret Haislip, a sheriff's dispatcher in Madison County. Two others were injured, she said.

Later in the day, two people were killed at Whitehouse, about 100 miles northeast of Normangee.

Sixty-five Texas counties were still under tornado watch or warning Sunday night.

Smith County Deputy Sheriff Randy Potts said several tornadoes touched down Sunday afternoon in Smith County, including the one that hit Whitehouse.

Caldwell Mayor William Broadus said, "The path of destruction is about 10 to 12 miles in length and a half-mile in width."

"In that path, the destruction is total. What is left of homes is nothing more than the concrete foundations. The metal and wood from barns, siding is up in the trees for miles."

Burleson County Sheriff A.G. Wilhelm said officials were checking all the damaged houses Sunday afternoon to make sure all the injured were accounted for.

"There are quite a few trailer houses torn up that people are not going to be able to go back to," Wilhelm said. "Some homes have been unroofed, and everyone is out of power because the lines are knocked down and a lot of trees are in the roads."

An undetermined number of people were missing, officials said.

The rash of tornadoes was unusual so late in the year.

Meteorologist Bill Hecke said, "Of course, they can happen anytime. This has been more of a classic pat-



Photo by Sam B. Myers

The middle beam of a storage shed is the only piece that remains standing after Sunday's tornado.

tern for severe weather because they have such a push of gulf moisture combining with warm, moist air."

The tornado cut a path of destruction for eight miles on each side of Caldwell, Burleson County sheriff's department dispatcher Cory Crajdoalk said.

Mike Cox, a spokesman for the

Department of Public Safety in Austin, said Joe Conway, editor of the *First County Citizens Tribune*, had the roof of his house blown off while he was in church.

Another family at the church would have been killed if it hadn't been attending the service because its trailer had been overturned.

In Bell County, north of Jarrell, there were reports that a barn was damaged and a mobile home was flipped over, said Kathy Rhodes, a dispatcher in the Bell County Sheriff's Department.

Rhodes said most of the damage was to trees and shrubs and no injuries had been reported.



Photo by Dean Saito

Karen Collins, left, and Karen Hernandez walk through debris that was thrown about when a tornado touched down just outside of Caldwell at about noon Sunday. The tornado tore down trees and completely demolished some houses, scattering tin roofing and household items. Collins and Hernandez were helping a friend sift through the debris for items that could be saved.

## Tornado destroys business, home in Caldwell

By Tracy Staton  
Staff Writer

On Texas 36 just north of Caldwell, a small white frame house is standing in the midst of debris—the aftermath of a tornado that swept through Burleson County Sunday afternoon.

Tin from the roofs of surrounding houses is twisted around tree trunks, whose only limbs are the stubs of now-scattered branches. A woman's blouse is stretched between two strands of a barbed-wire fence. A mangled bathtub, a toaster and a silver hairbrush are heaped in the back yard, just in front of a collapsed barn.

The dark clouds still hovering ominously in the western sky only hint at the destructive power of the storm they brought to east-central

Texas. Even the pieces it left strewn across the pastures of this farm could assemble only an eerie sense of the chaos of a few hours before.

But to Susie Gerdes and her father, Collie Gerdes, the tornado is very real. They were huddled in a closet in the white house when the storm whipped across the Gerdes' property.

"It had been raining a little and the sky was about the color it is now," Susie Gerdes, 40, said. "Then I heard a roaring like a lot of trains. I hollered at Daddy and told him that either a train was going by and the wind was carrying the noise or there was a tornado coming."

Gerdes said she looked out and saw the trees whipping in the wind, but still didn't see a funnel cloud.

"I ran and threw everything out of the closet anyway," the Caldwell native said. "Daddy and I got in the closet and put suitcases over our heads."

Gerdes said she waited until everything was relatively calm to venture outside.

"As soon as I could I went out to look for my cats," she said. "They're alive, but one is under the bed and he won't come out."

After the cats' safety was assured, Gerdes and her father surveyed the damage to their property. They found only one of their nine rent houses intact and all three barns leveled. None of the renters were home at the time of the storm.

"We're going to try to salvage two of the rent houses—they need new roofs," she said. "We're just getting

some plastic to cover the roof for now."

Debris from the destroyed homes

is deposited across the 60-acre farm. Appliances, dishes and clothing intermingle with twisted tin and splintered wood. Power lines felled by tree limbs stretch from leaning poles.

Gerdes said she didn't think the houses could be replaced with the insurance money.

"These were older remodeled homes," she said. "The insurance company doesn't want to put that much insurance on older houses. We may be able to build some smaller houses to replace them, but it's going to be hard in today's economy."

The Gerdes' loss is more significant. See Tornado, page 6

## Plane crash in Denver kills at least 19, injures 54

DENVER (AP)—A Continental Airlines jet with 81 people aboard flipped on its back while taking off from Denver's airport in a snowstorm Sunday and skidded along the runway, killing at least 19 people and injuring 54 more, authorities said.

"We counted 18 dead outside the plane, and there are several dead in the fuselage," Stapleton International Airport spokesman

Richard Boulware said. Twenty-one people walked away from the crash, officials said.

The DC-9 twin-engine jet, Flight 1713, was carrying 76 passengers and five crew members from Denver to Boise, Idaho, said Continental spokesman Ned Walker. Walker said the flight originated in Oklahoma City, and the crash took place shortly after 3 p.m. CST. Rescue work was ham-

pered by falling snow and ice, visibility was poor and some survivors were still trapped inside the plane more than four hours after the accident, authorities said.

"Many people are survivors at this point," Walker said. "It's too early to speculate on anything that could have occurred (to make the plane crash)."

National Transportation Safety Board chairman James Burnett and nine Wash-

ington-based investigators will fly to Denver to investigate the Sunday night crash, NTSB spokesman Ted Lopatkiewicz said.

At Denver General Hospital, Dr. Peter Pons said there were 19 confirmed deaths and that 54 people were taken to area hospitals with injuries, and three were in critical condition. He said eight people were believed to be in the wreckage, with one or two of them believed still alive. Rescue

workers set up emergency lights on the runway and used electric saws to remove wreckage.

Denver police officer John Wyckoff said, "Right now there's emergency operations trying to get injured people extracted from the plane. It's just a chaotic scene right now."

Boulware said the airplane "is on its back."

## Dukakis tells A&M students U.S. needs to get serious about arms control

By Doug Driskell  
Staff Writer

The Strategic Defense Initiative, known as "star wars," is a waste of money and will not work, presidential candidate Mike Dukakis told Texas A&M students at a satellite teleconference Friday afternoon in Rudder Theater.

"Let's get serious about arms control and arms reduction on earth, not add to our problems with an unbelievably expensive program that, in my judgment, won't work," he said to television viewers and the campus audience of about 900.

The Democratic governor of Massachusetts arrived at Easterwood airport from Dallas to take part in a conference televised to 50 other locations in 26 states. Dukakis answered questions phoned in and from the audience.

"I would like the United States to spend more time on our relationship in Mexico and perhaps less time with Nicaragua," he said in response to a Mexican student's question on Central America.

"What we have been doing in Nicaragua is one of the worst foreign policy fiascos in the history of this country," he said. "It not only has been doomed to failure from the beginning, it is illegal under the Rio Treaty and under the charter of the Organization for American States, which includes Mexico and other Central American countries."

Dukakis continued by praising the president of Costa Rica for taking the initiative in Central America and said that House Speaker Jim Wright

is filling the "vacuum of leadership" in the White House with his negotiations involving Nicaragua.

Dukakis attributed the scheduling of the upcoming summit to the willingness of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

"What you have in Gorbachev and the people around him is new, younger, less ideological and more pragmatic leadership that understands if the Soviet Union continues to spend 16 percent of its gross national product on the military and doesn't open up that society to new ideas, new enterprise and new initiative, the Soviet Union is going to become a second- or third-rate power," he said.

Dukakis predicted that if the Dec. 7 summit goes well, it will set a precedent for the next president.

"We are going to need a strong national defense for many years to come," he said. "And the next president of the United States is going to have to be somebody who can manage and lead and give us that strong national defense."

Dukakis seemed loose and relaxed during the question-and-answer session. The relaxed image was the intention of the campaign planners, said Kenneth Bunting, the Austin bureau chief for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

Before speaking, Dukakis walked among the members of the audience, shaking hands and answering questions. He said he came to A&M to speak to the students who are also voters and are young and energetic.

After the teleconference, Dukakis commented on the recent decline in

the foreign trade deficit. He said it is a modest reduction, which is most likely due to the reduction of the dollar's value.

"The problem is, we got ourselves in this mess when the president persuaded the Congress that you can increase defense spending, cut taxes and balance the budget," he said. "It was a fairy tale then, and it is a fairy tale now. In 1980, we were a creditor nation. Now we are the world's greatest debtor."

Dukakis criticized President Reagan and the current administration for not emphasizing fiscal responsibility, which should be a president's main concern, he said.

"What troubles me is that the administration that hasn't been able to balance the budget in seven years is proposing a balanced-budget amendment," he said. "Why doesn't the president get serious about deficit reduction, instead of talking about constitutional amendments?"

Dukakis said more fiscal responsibility in this country would lead to more trade with the European community. He also said he wants the Japanese to invest more in Third World countries.

Sen. Kent Caperton attended the teleconference, but said he was undecided who he will support for the Democratic nomination.

"I was certainly very impressed," Caperton said. "I thought he handled the questions extremely well. He is very knowledgeable and has a very good track record, and I think he could bring a lot of strength to the Democratic Party."

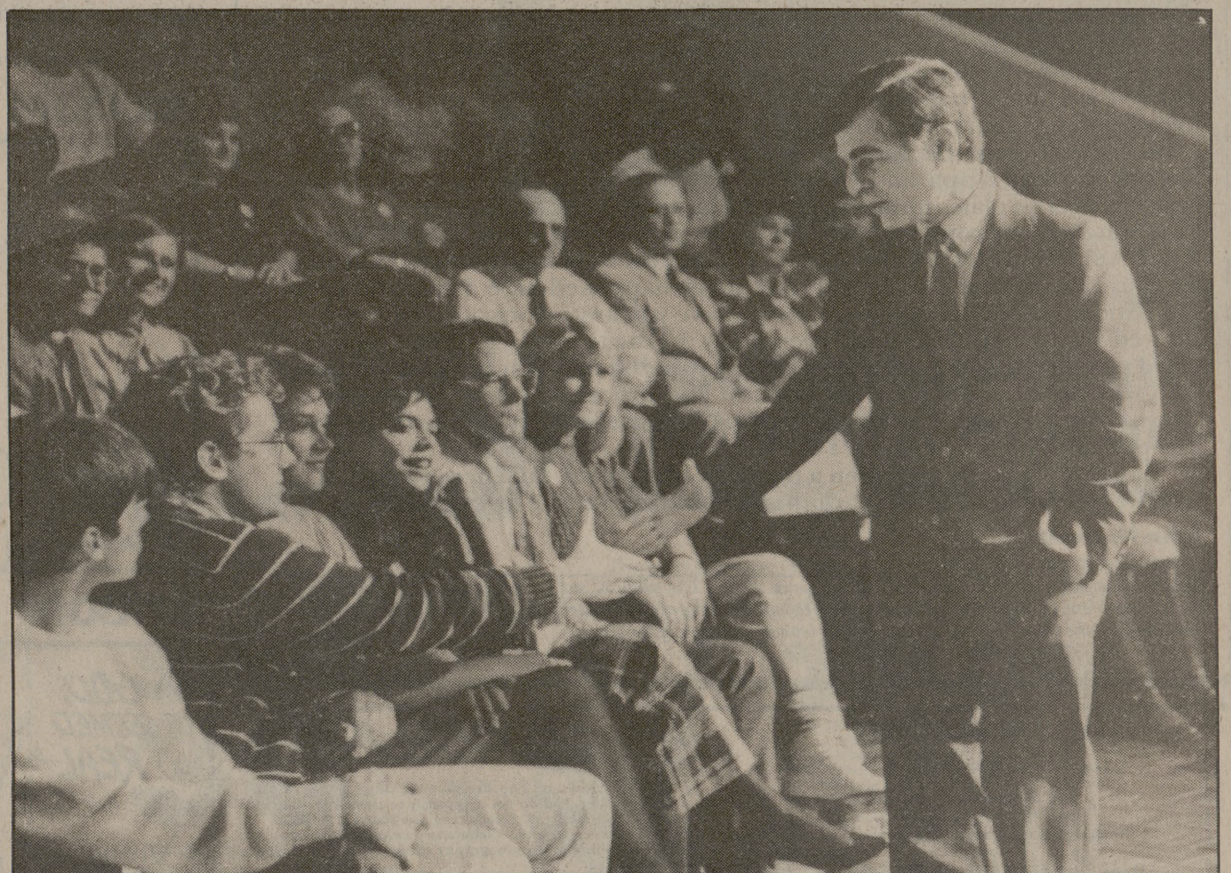


Photo by Sam B. Myers

Gov. Mike Dukakis of Massachusetts shakes hands with a student before the airing of a teleconference Friday in Rudder Theater. Dukakis, a

Democratic presidential candidate, answered questions from telephone calls and the audience of about 900 people after brief opening remarks.