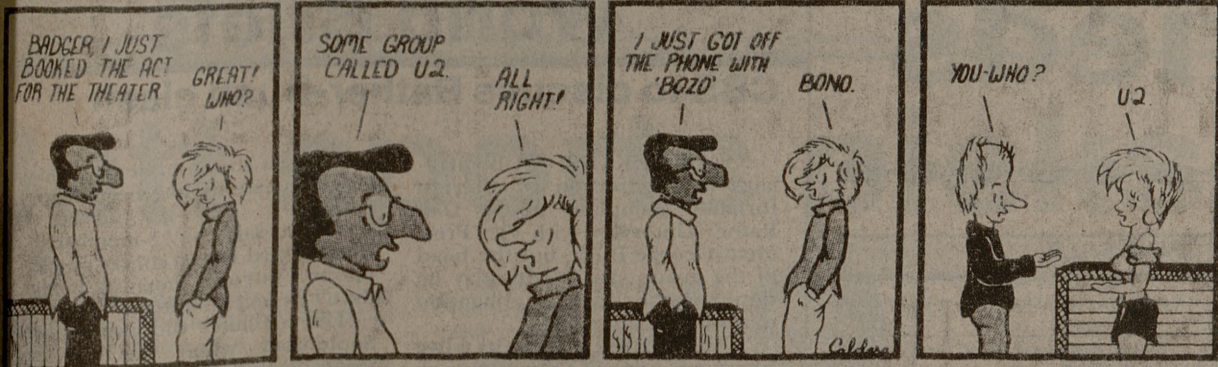


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by JON CALDARA



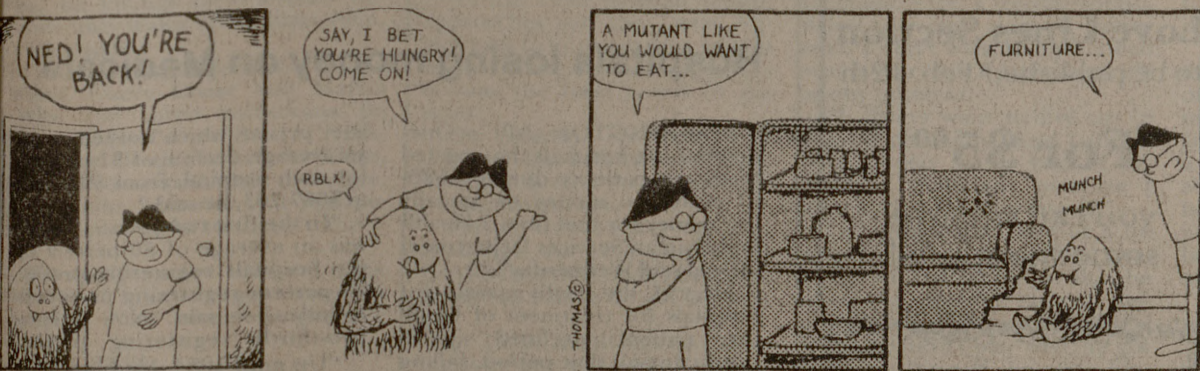
Warped

by Scott McCullar



Waldo

by Kevin Thomas



Permian Basin area battles bubonic plague outbreak

MIDLAND (AP) — An outbreak of bubonic plague, blamed for the deaths of many small animals and initially thought to affect a small portion of two counties, now is believed to cover half the Permian Basin, state health officials said.

Midland, Ector, Howard, Martin, Upton, Crane, Glasscock, Dawson and Borden counties are affected by the outbreak, said Dr. Evret C. Newman, Texas' Department of Health regional veterinarian.

A week ago, Newman had said the outbreak seemed to be confined to an area between Midland and Stanton in Martin County.

At the time, health officials sus-

pected the outbreak covered a wider area but made no mention of their fears because full reports weren't in, Newman said.

Since last week's news conference, the health department has received at least 200 calls reporting dead pack rats, cotton rats and rabbits in the other counties, the veterinarian said.

The outbreak probably won't spread into cities, but residents living in affected areas should keep their pets indoors and sprinkle them with flea powder twice a week, said health officials.

At greatest risk of contracting the disease are hunters and oilfield employees who work in brushy areas, Newman said. The disease generally

is spread by infected fleas that bite animals or humans.

One Midland hunter, Trey Robbins, 32, said Thursday he first started seeing dead rats and mice on a Glasscock County ranch last October.

"Here recently we've noticed a lot fewer rabbits there than there were a few months ago," he said. "We've been hunting around there for the last 20 years, and it's unlike anything we've ever seen before."

The last human death from the plague recorded in the Permian Basin came in February 1982, Newman said, when an Ector County man died after getting flea bites while hunting rabbits.

Social worker may be placed with homeless

FORT WORTH (AP) — The slaying of a Dallas policeman by a mentally ill homeless man has prompted Tarrant County officials to consider placing a social worker at a shelter that houses hundreds of homeless people.

The Rev. Andrew Short, executive director of the Presbyterian Night Shelter, said many of the 400 people staying overnight at the shelter were there because they had been released from hospitals.

Short added Wednesday that the Dallas shooting illustrates the need for a social worker at the Fort Worth shelter.

Officer John Chase was shot to death Saturday on a street in downtown Dallas by a man with a history of mental problems. Chase's assailant, Carl Dudley Williams, was killed moments later in a shootout with off-duty officers.

Officials say blocking service on 976 calls has loopholes

DALLAS (AP) — Phone company officials who offered a blocking service to prevent children from calling sexually explicit "976" numbers say a loophole allows customers to call the numbers long-distance, avoiding the blocking and service charge.

Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. had announced it would begin offering the blocking service Feb. 20 to prevent telephones from reaching local 976 numbers.

But company officials said Tuesday they have known about the technological and regulatory loophole, and that there is little they can do to prevent customers from taking advantage of it.

"It's bigger than just the problem we have here," Lowell Whitlock, a Bell marketing executive in San Antonio, said. "Not only can Texas numbers be reached, but 976 numbers in other states can be reached."

Bell officials and an attorney for the 976 companies confirmed that customers can also call 976 numbers outside their area codes, pay only

the toll charge and avoid paying the fee to the 976 provider.

For example, a Houston resident could call a 976 number in Dallas and pay as little as \$2 in long-distance charges to hear a message, while a Dallas resident calling the same service would have to pay the \$9 fee.

"We can't track or bill for the long distance 976 calls," Whitlock said.

Residential customers have 60 days from the Feb. 20 startup date to get the local blocking service free. After that they will have to pay \$7 for the service. Businesses also can get the blocking service but must pay the fee.

Whitlock said Bell and 976-service providers are asking state and regulatory officials for permission to block the long-distance 976 calls. It could be months, however, before approval is granted, he said.

A quick solution to the problem would be for long-distance telephone companies to voluntarily block long distance 976 calls, Whitlock said.

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Sunday Feb 28, March 6, 27, April 3, 17	7:30-8:45pm	\$14/student \$16/nonstudent

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