

State and Local

Director to speak about hydrogen

By Stephen Masters
Staff Writer

The warming of the earth caused by the "greenhouse effect" can possibly be prevented by avoiding coal and turning to other forms of fuel such as hydrogen, Dr. A. John Appleby said Monday afternoon.

Appleby, director of the Texas A&M Center for Electrochemical Systems and Hydrogen Research, is scheduled to testify Wednesday before a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research and the Environment, and Sciences, Research and Technology.

The subcommittee is examining problems caused by the greenhouse effect, in which the earth is blanketed by chemicals from pollutants such as carbon dioxide and indus-

trial gases. These chemicals allow sunlight to pass through to reach the earth but not to leave, which results in an average temperature increase for the planet. Scientists are worried that such an increase will eventually be large enough to melt the Antarctic icebergs.

Dr. James Hansen of NASA testified Thursday that the greenhouse effect is responsible for making the 1980s one of the warmest decades in the past 100 years. Four of the warmest years in the past century have occurred during the 1980s.

Appleby pointed to research by a joint French-Soviet project in the Antarctic where atmospheric carbon dioxide increased by only 110 parts per million in almost 160,000 years. The study showed an increase of 45 ppm over the next 30 years, up about 1.5 ppm per year.

Because of the rising concern over the greenhouse effect, alternate fuel sources that do not release carbon dioxide are being sought, he said. Funding is currently being sought for research on a way to make hydrogen from coal, he said.

"We think we have a way to make hydrogen from coal," he said, "which will prevent putting CO2 into the atmosphere."

"This technology looks extremely promising for the future. The object is to use a gasifier in which coal, steam and oxygen are reacted."

Appleby said that getting the Department of Energy to take such research seriously is a concern. Currently the DOE provides \$400,000 a year, an amount Appleby called "miniscule."

Hydrogen could become a re-

placement for transportation fuel, he said.

"Hydrogen is a fuel, especially in a fuel cell, that produces no noxious emissions — only steam," he said. "Fuel cells don't produce oxides of nitrogen, which means no sulfur, so that's the end of the acid rain problem."

Appleby said research also is being done on solar cells which operate on the same principle as color film. The cells will produce energy at only 20 percent efficiency, which he said would be a cost of around \$350 per peak kilowatt-hour of solar energy, down from the \$1,000 per peak kilowatt-hour estimated by the DOE for standard solar cells.

Although he admits liquid hydrogen is safer than some forms of fuel, he said it is still dangerous in the wrong situation.

Four die when small plane crashes

NOODLE, Texas (AP) — A Lubbock couple and their two grandchildren were killed when their single-engine plane crashed about 20 minutes after taking off from Abilene Municipal airport, authorities said.

The Sunday afternoon crash occurred shortly after the pilot radioed asking for directions around severe weather, according to flight controllers.

Department of Public Safety spokesman Mike Cox identified the four victims of the plane crash as pilot William McKay Harr, 64, of Lubbock; his wife, Gladys Stelzer Harr, 61; their grandson, Jonathan Harr, 9, of El Campo; and his sister Christian Harr, 6.

The four victims were pronounced dead at the scene by Jones County Justice of the Peace Tom Isbell.

The plane's wreckage was found in a grassy

field early Monday.

The Harr's plane took off from Abilene Sunday afternoon en route to Lubbock, but air traffic controllers at Abilene Municipal Airport lost radio and radar contact with the craft about 10 to 15 minutes later, Rody Mauldin, air traffic manager, said.

Mauldin said thunderstorms were reported in the area about the time radio contact was lost, but air traffic supervisor Bruce Blair said there was no rain in Abilene at the time Harr left the airport.

Blair said Harr had called the Federal Aviation Administration's automated flight service in Fort Worth for a weather report before takeoff.

FAA officials referred calls about the contents of that report to spokesman Geraldine Cook, who could not immediately be reached for comment by the Associated Press.

"During our last contact with the plane, the pilot said he was in clear weather but saw some bad weather ahead of him," Blair said.

"We gave him permission to go around the weather, and then we lost contact," she said.

Wreckage of the plane was found one mile north of Noodle, 28 miles northwest of Abilene, officials said.

Charlie Turner, a farmer in the Jones County area where the plane went down, said he heard a crack at the time of the crash.

However, because it was raining in the area at the time, he assumed it was thunder.

"After the crack, I heard an engine roar twice," Turner said.

"After that, there was nothing," he said.

Harr was a retired executive with Southwestern Public Service, a utility company.

Local Briefs

Gas tax helps pay for local road repairs

By Jay Stevens
Reporter

The 1984 gasoline tax increase from 5 cents to 10 cents has paid for long-needed improvements on Texas roads and probably will save taxpayers money, a spokesman for the Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation said.

"Now, with all the vehicles, the roads would literally crumble without the improvements," Public Information Officer Gina McAskill said. "And it would cost \$180 billion to replace Texas roads."

McAskill said the Highway Department is concentrating on urban areas where improvements can do the most good for the most people.

Locally, construction on University Drive will be completed by summer of 1989. Until then, lanes will be closed and traffic will be more congested, engineering assistant Katherine Hejl of the Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation said.

Several sections of highway in College Station will be receiving a new riding surface. The schedule for the resurfacing is:

June 27 through Friday — Resurfacing of Texas Avenue from University Drive to FM 2818.

Monday through July 8 — Resurfacing of University Drive from FM 2154 to FM 2818.

These dates are subject to change in cases of bad weather conditions.

Summer graduates may stall graduation

By Had Binion
Reporter

As August graduation approaches, many seniors will decide to wait until December to graduate because of the increased number of employers interviewing on campus in the fall.

"Around the end of May, a number of students will come in wanting to stay and graduate in December instead of August," Daniel Orozco, assistant director of the Career Planning and Placement Center, said. "If they can afford to stay another long semester, I advise them to do so."

Orozco said 10 percent of the student population uses the placement center — 20 percent of those are August graduates.

Most companies interview

through the placement center during a two-week period in both the first and second summer sessions. Last summer, 15 companies came to interview. He expects about 30 this summer.

During the fall and spring, interviews are conducted for 12 weeks per semester.

Last year, 675 companies interviewed students at A&M. This year, Orozco expects 700.

"If you are utilizing the placement center, summers are just not as lucrative as far as interviewing goes," Orozco said, "although career counseling is better because there aren't so many people on campus."

Orozco said although the placement center is helpful, students should not depend completely on it to find interviews.

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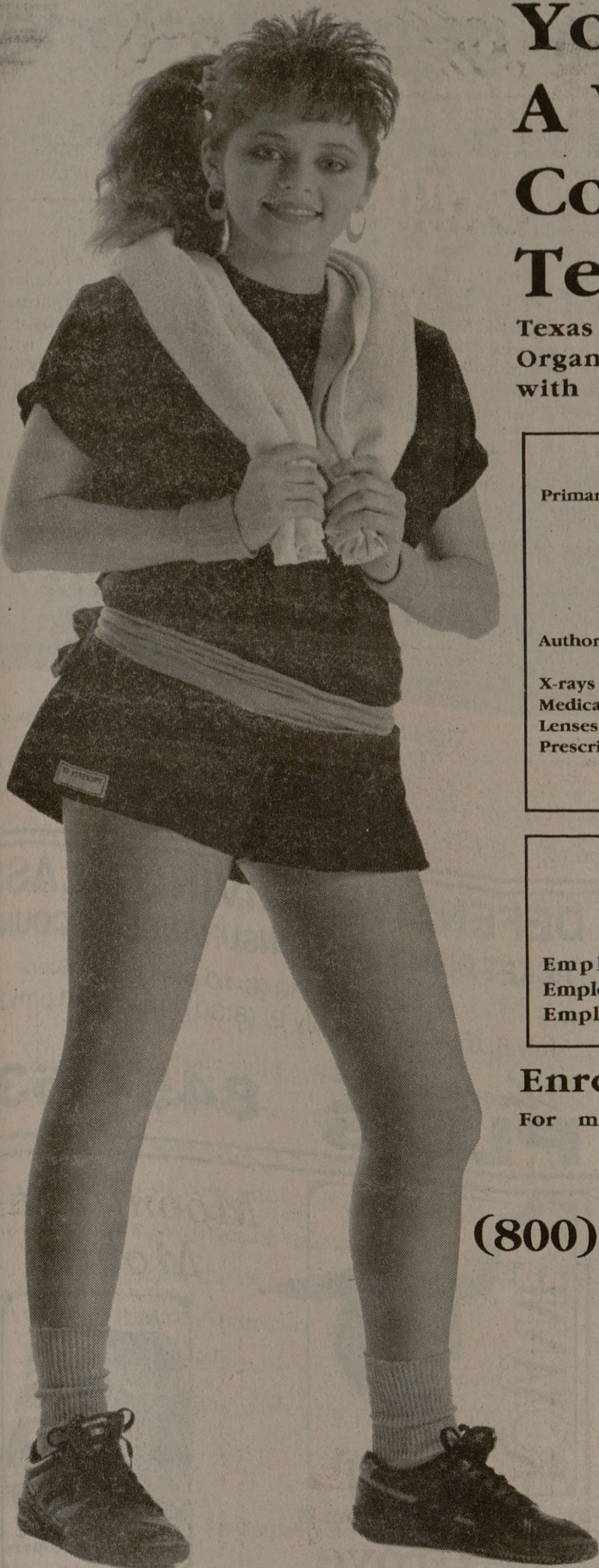
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