#### State and Local

## Climatologist: Drought conditions ess severe than others this century

**By Mercedes Salinas** 

Reporter

te Climatologist John F. Grifis said the current drought in xas is just a small dry spell pared to droughts in the

Records of the National eather Service show that at least serious drought has plagued ts of Texas every decade this The most costly and devastat-

drought to hit Texas in modn history was the massive ought that damaged every re-on of the state in the 1950s. The 50s drought was the worst

om the stand point of intensity, coverage and persistence riffiths, an A&M professor of teorology, said. Dr. William A. Dugas, whose

search at the Texas Agricultu-Experiment Station in Temple cuses on water used by crops id rangelands, also has helped ck Texas droughts this cen-

The intensity of droughts since 1950s has not been as strong d they have been of shorter duion, Dugas said.

A massive searing heat wave in 80 set in motion a severe ought that scorched most of e state. By 1984 the drought d brought severe problems to ntral and southern portions of

Weather service records show

#### A&M study may help forecasters make more accurate predictions

By Gina Rumore

A Texas A&M rainfall study may result in better forecasts of precipitation on a monthly basis, allowing

for better planning during dry spells. said he hopes the study will provide much more reliable tematic change to it."

Lyons said if prediction of rainfall cannot be obprecipitation as above or below normal in Texas.

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and they need to irrigate soon, the officials can tell mal,'

'Then the farmers know to go ahead and irrigate.' Lyons said the accuracy and reliability of the forcast ter months are dry, such as this year, it is not common." is critical because if the officials cannot confidently pre-

Lyons said he had analyzed rainfall data from 50 sta- much harder

tions around Texas from 1923 to 1984 and the data was put into a computer that gave the dominant rainfall

"What I found was that there are no dominant cycles," Lyons said. "We may know the past rainfall patterns fairly readily for each season and we may know Dr. Steven Lyons, a forecasting specialist at A&M, how they have changed in the past, but there is no sys-

Lyons said such information could allow individuals there are wet and dry months.

to plan ahead.
"I don't think we'll ever be able to say, 'It looks like
"If it's already dry and farmers are hurting for water the next month will be 2.2 inches below or above nor-'Lyons said. "And it doesn't look like we'll be able them if it will be dry for another month," Lyons said. to predict many months in advance but the study does tell us that when March, April, May, June and the win-

dict rainfall conditions, the information will not help rainfall will be above or below normal is well within reach, but trying to determine how wet or dry will be

the droughts of the 1950s first began in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in the late spring of 1949. They then plagued western portions of the state several months later and had become severe over the remainder of the state by

In the spring of 1957, the rains finally came and erased some of

the damage.

Even though there were some steady soaking rains between February and April 1957, there were many dead mesquite trees left standing as grim reminders of the state's most devastating drought

Perhaps because of media advancements and the publicity of

droughts during the summer months our judgment of drought has changed, Griffiths said. "Texas has experienced droughts in the 80s but not any-

where near the intensity of those in the 50s, which we can only recall in our memory," Griffiths said. "As a state we are hurting this summer but we are not agonizing. We've been lucky.

#### Appeals court says murder defendants can't question jury

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Wednesday that capital murder defendants do not have a constitutional right to question prospective jurors about their understanding of Texas

The full court ruled 11-3 against Leon Rutherford King, who contended that a Texas state court had violated his sixth and 14th amendment rights by refusing to allow him to question the jurors or educate them concerning their knowledge of Texas parole laws.

King and Allen Ray Carter kid-napped Michael Clayton Under-wood and his girlfriend, who was not identified, at gunpoint 10 years ago in Houston. Court records show the men forced Underwood's girlfriend to watch while King beat Underwood's head with a shotgun butt until it looked like a "broken egg."

For nearly five hours after murdering Underwood, King and Carter repeatedly raped and sodomized their female hostage, threatened her life and laughed at having made her observe the execution of her "old man," according to court docu-

ishment phase of his second trial that he wanted the death penality.

King told the jury during the pun-

In his petition to the 5th Circuit, King said that if the jury harbored misconceptions about Texas law, for

instance, an erroneous belief that a capital murder defendant may become eligible for parole in seven to 10 years, they will be biased toward imposing the death penalty.

The federal appeals court said King not only had no constitutional includes the federal appeals.

right to question the jurors before sentencing, but that in light of his crime and conduct during his trial, it would not have changed his sen-

"King told the jury that he expected to receive the death penalty, admitted that he deserved it, and requested that it be imposed," Judge Edith H. Jones wrote in the majority

'Any subliminal effect of a juror's impressions concerning parole must surely be subordinated to the impact of this testimony.

"Add to this the determinedly sadistic nature of the crime and associated events, and we find it impossible to think that a jury would have somehow believed King less danger-ous to society . . . in 20 years than he would be if paroled in seven to 10,"

In writing the dissenting opinion, Judge Alvin B. Rubin said that Leon Rutherford King had been proved beyond reasonable doubt to be a savage criminal, but that did not keep him from being entitled to due proc-

### &M regents award \$14 million in construction contracts

By Andrea Halbert

Reporter

Texas A&M Board of Regents ed the way for the construction of five dormitories, a parking garage and construction projects when it rded contracts worth \$14 million earlier

five new modular dormitories provided for in a \$9.5 million contract.

These residence halls will house A&M students in Fall 1989, said General Wesley Peel, vice chancellor for Facilities Planning and Construction.

The new halls should be ready by Sep-

tember 1989, he said. One of the halls will be next to the other modular halls near Sbisa, and four new halls will be built in the parking lot south of the Commons, Peel said.

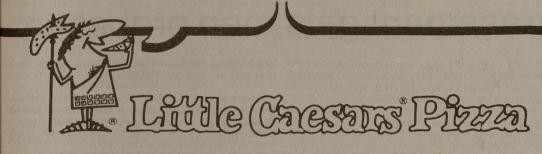
He said a 2,000-space parking garage will be built near the Commons to provide parking spaces for the 1,000 new hall resispaces in the Commons parking lot that will be lost as a result of the construction.

The regents awarded a contract for preliminary design work on a 2,000-space parking garage to be located adjacent to the Memorial Student Center. Peel said the parking garage is part of the MSC expansion planned for next year.

Other contracts awarded at the July 18 Board meeting include construction of fence segments on Texas Avenue to mark campus boundaries, purchase of equipment for a new satellite utility plant and purchase of furnishings for renovation of the Chemistry Building.

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