

State and Local

State poverty level passes 18 percent for 1980's decade

AUSTIN (AP) — The number of Texans living below the federal poverty line has increased by more than 1 million since 1980, bringing the state's poverty rate to more than 18 percent, a new study says.

By the end of 1987, an estimated 3.07 million Texans lived in poverty, an increase of 1.03 million over the 1980 total.

Under federal guidelines, a family of four earning less than \$11,200 in 1987 was considered to be living in poverty.

According to the state-sponsored study, Presidio County in West Texas had the highest concentration of poor residents. More than half of that county's citizens, 55.11 percent, lived below the federal poverty line, according to the study conducted by the Texas Department of Human Services and Texas Department of Health.

State officials said they weren't surprised by the growing number of poor.

Brian Packard, an associate commissioner with the Department of Human Services, speculated that the state's sluggish economy, particularly in the petroleum industry, helped spark the increase.

Between 1980 and 1987, the period of the study, the state's population grew to 17 million.

Carol Daniels, chief of the health department's bureau of state health data and policy analysis, said the poverty figures will be used to help the two state agencies channel funds to the appropriate counties.

Because of the growing needs for their services, both departments are asking for increased funding from the Legislature for the 1990-91 budget period.

The health department was allocated about \$311 million for 1988-89 and seeks \$438 million for 1990-91. The human services department expects to spend about \$2.4 billion in 1988-89 and seeks \$3.5 billion in state funds for 1990-91.

Black man's murder sparks life in East Texas resident

HEMPHILL (AP) — The black man's violent death and the circumstances surrounding it registered in Vollie Grace's chest, a nightmarish, suffocating feeling like he was standing in a dark tunnel and the walls were closing in.

His discomfort those days in early January was puzzling, Grace remembers now, for while it occurred only a few miles from his home, the fatal beating of Sabine County prisoner Loyal Garner Jr. seemed to have little obvious bearing on what Grace considered a happy existence.

Like Garner, Grace is black. But in his 47 years, most of them spent near this East Texas village, he had always been treated fairly by whites. He had carved out a comfortable life for himself and his family with hard work, owned a cement finishing business and kept his mouth shut.

In his version of the American dream, Grace could come home at the end of a day, eat his favorite meal of steak and rice, and plop down on a padded sofa in a cool living room in front of his color TV.

To Grace, if injustice indeed existed, it existed elsewhere.

But then, on Christmas Day last year, while Grace and his family

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— Alice Grace

dined on holiday ham, Garner, a 34-year-old truck driver from Florien, La., just east across the border, was arrested in Hemphill for suspicion of drunken driving. Two days later Garner was dead in a Tyler hospital from head injuries delivered in jail by three white law officers, subsequent criminal charges alleged.

Hemphill was hence lugged unwillingly into the national spotlight. At the same time, for reasons he still doesn't fully understand, the gentle life of Vollie Grace was changed forever.

Today, the man once so oblivious to problems outside his own life both leads and epitomizes a black awakening spawned in Hemphill by Garner's death and its aftermath, an awakening that has turned this quiet Piney Woods town on end.

Ladner and suspended Sabine County deputies James Hyden and Bill Horton, who were accused of violating Garner's civil rights.

Grace now is president of the fledgling Sabine County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is a newly appointed minority representative to an East Texas government council and is still president of Concerned Citizens.

Even Grace's wife of 21 years finds the turnabout in her husband curious.

"He would hardly talk before this came about," Alice Grace, 44, said. "Now I just can't seem to keep up. There's something different every month, something else he needs to look into or explore. Now he'll tell you what he's thinking."

"Now he's thinking about it all day and dreaming at night about something he needs to do."

Don Coleman, Grace's close friend from nearby Jasper, thinks there is a Vollie Grace in every rural community in America, waiting to be summoned by circumstances to leadership.

Bentsen's records give wrong amount

HOUSTON (AP) — The blind trust of Democratic vice presidential nominee Lloyd Bentsen invested about \$564,000 — more than twice the amount previously disclosed — in a holding company that was formed by his son last year but has conducted little business since then, a published report said Wednesday.

The *Houston Post* also reported that the company has been paying the financially strapped Lan Bentsen nearly \$10,000 a month for his services as president and board chairman, according to a record of his testimony in an Aug. 3 divorce hearing.

Bentsen, the Texas senator, den-

ied Tuesday that he influenced the investment decision and said he saw nothing unusual about the transaction. He acknowledged, however, that trust administrators probably based their decision on what he would have done in the same circumstances.

"I don't consider it unusual to consider how a father would feel about the investment in his son's business," Bentsen said. "I consider it an investment in my son's future."

Senate records show the investment originated as a personal loan Bentsen made to his son in October 1986 for between \$100,000 and \$250,000.

Paper says official paid for appointments

AUSTIN (AP) — A state official under investigation for allegedly offering a \$100,000 contract in return for the hiring of a state employee made a similar offer to the commissioner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported Wednesday.

Gene Shelton, whose resignation as deputy director of the Texas Department of Commerce takes effect Thursday, is one of several people under investigation by federal authorities for an alleged deal in which an Austin-based job-training program partly funded by the U.S. Department of Labor was offered the state contract in April 1987, the newspaper said.

It said the investigation concerns whether in return for the contract, the jobs program director, David Duke, agreed to hire Jane Johnson,

then an employee of the Texas Department of Community Affairs. Duke eventually hired Johnson.

Shelton at the time was assistant director of the TDCA, which writes contracts with private programs and other state agencies to disburse Labor Department funds.

Sources in state government and people familiar with the investigation told the newspaper that Shelton previously tried to get Ms. Johnson hired at the Coordinating Board. The sources said that at the same time, he either offered to expand the board's TDCA contract, or threatened or implied the contract could be rescinded.

Johnson apparently was unaware of the alleged efforts in her behalf. Higher Education Commissioner Ken Ashworth, asked about Shelton allegedly tying Johnson's job to the contract, said: "I'm reluctant to re-

spond to that. My understanding is that this may end up in litigation. I'm aware there are some investigations going on."

Shelton said he met with Ashworth to ask if Johnson could be hired at the Coordinating Board, but he added: "I don't think we ever talked about the contract the Coordinating Board had with TDCA."

"Without any question at all, there was never any implication or certainly any direct threat to Ashworth," Shelton said. "I would have avoided any type of implication like that."

The *American-Statesman* reported that its sources said Ashworth was told a dropout prevention program funded with TDCA money would receive more money if Johnson was hired, but that Ashworth flatly rejected the offer. One source said Shelton then threatened to re-

scind the contract unless Johnson was hired, the newspaper said.

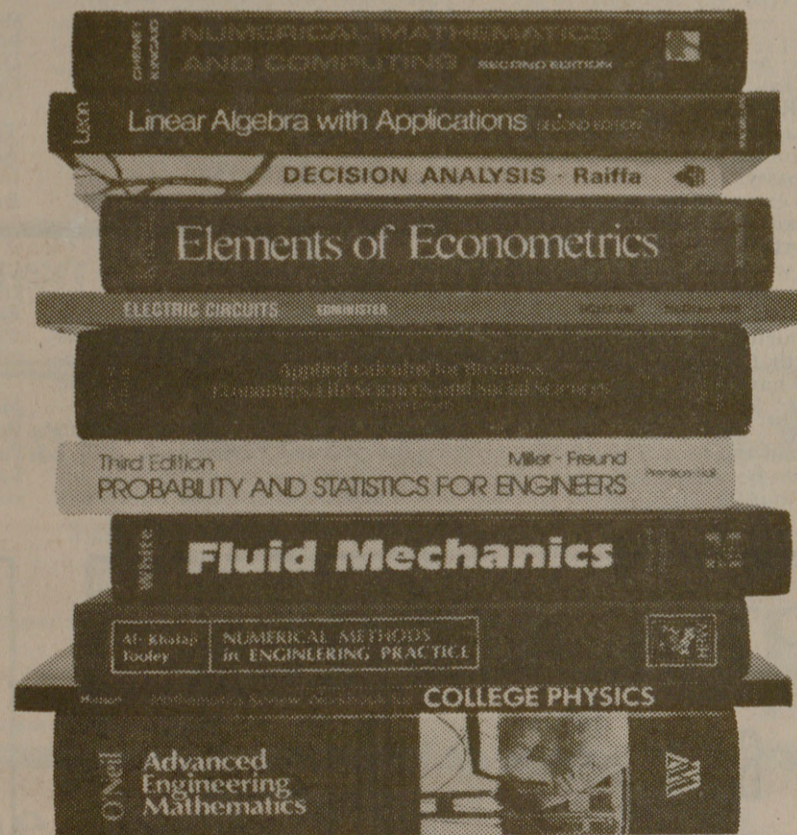
The contract in question funded Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a program for disadvantaged teens.

Correction

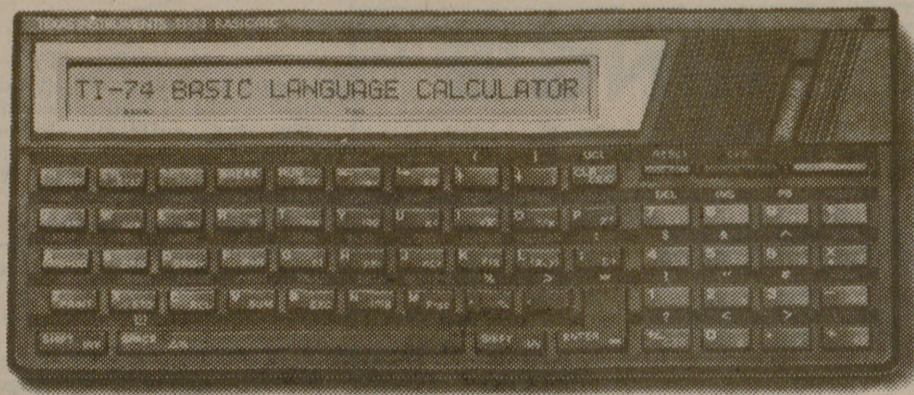
In a story in the Aug. 30 issue of *The Battalion*, it was incorrectly reported that permits for the parking garage currently under construction on the north side of campus cost \$150 per semester.

They cost \$150 per year. Also, Robert Smith is the vice president for finance and operations, not the interim vice president for fiscal affairs as was reported.

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