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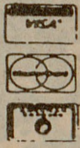
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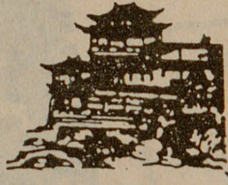
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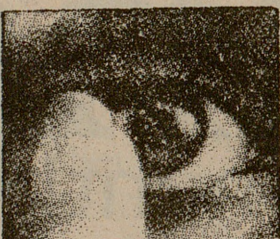
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Dallas's 'Ruff House' shelters those other agencies do not

DALLAS (AP) — People live at Ruff House because they're out of money, out of work or out of options.

They come to the eight little frame buildings on rural Langdon Road in Dallas to get back on their feet. Or to dry out. Or to grow up. Or because nobody else wants them. Often, it's a combination.

Ruff House is a place for people who don't belong in the hospital or in jail or in a mental facility — people who don't fall under the jurisdiction of other helping agencies.

"We take anyone who needs a home for any reason," George Ruff said.

It is this philosophy, officials say, that sets Ruff House apart and fills a need in a city where homelessness is a constant problem, especially during very hot or very cold weather.

This summer, with its oppressive heat, was a busy one for George and Alice Ruff.

"Police take a lot of people there, and Parkland sends people there when they're not sick enough to stay in the hospital but not well enough to be out on the streets," said Dan Alaniz, a manager in the Dallas Department of Health and Human Services.

"It's not a real slick operation. It's not real pretty. But they tend not to turn anybody away. I have so much respect for the work they do."

On a recent day the Ruffs said was average, there were 94 people at Ruff House. That is considered a capacity crowd, but as many as 150 have stayed there at times, some sleeping on the floor of the small chapel.

"Our primary objective is to offer shelter and food for the mentally, physically and emotionally handicapped," Jim Bidelhausen, a former management consultant, said.

Bidelhausen came to Ruff House several years ago to recuperate from heart surgery and stayed to help the Ruffs handle public relations and manage the home.

There is nothing lavish about the accommodations at Ruff House. Used, donated furniture sits on linoleum or worn carpeting inside the tiny buildings, connected by tarpaper walkways in need of repair. Small window units provide scant air conditioning in some of the buildings; fans battle the heat in others.

Dallas is funneling \$72,776 in federal money into Ruff House this

year for renovations to help it comply with city codes, Alaniz said.

Bidelhausen said the home's annual operating expenses are about \$300,000, all of which comes from individual and church donations.

Ruff House gets food from the North Texas Food Bank, and individuals and groups donate clothing, furniture and cars.

A question about staff draws a shrug from the Ruffs.

"Staff?" asked Alice Ruff. "There is no staff." There are only the residents of Ruff House, who are expected to contribute to the household by cooking, cleaning or doing other assigned chores.

George Ruff, wheelchair-bound by childhood polio, said he began helping people in Kansas, where he grew up.

"People have helped me," he said, "so I help others in return." He and Alice Ruff married on July 28, 1967. She had a license to care for abused children, and Ruff House Ministries grew out of that.

The couple moved to Dallas 13 years ago because of Alice Ruff's asthma.

They bought a small house on Langdon Road in Dallas, south of Interstate 635.

"We started expanding," Ruff said, "and we're still expanding."

There are no neighbors to complain. State officials consider Ruff House a shelter rather than a care home, so they don't press the Ruffs to get an institutional license.

The Ruffs have adopted or obtained legal guardianship of five retarded or handicapped residents. One is Vincent, 33, who has lived with the Ruffs since 1970.

"His mother brought him to me," Alice Ruff says. "He was deaf, blind and retarded. He was 15 and he was a complete infant at that time. They (doctors) told us he would never function at all. They told us he was a 'blob.' Now, he functions fine."

Vincent still has speech problems but is an ebullient member of the Ruff House community who loves to strum guitars and play records. His hearing has improved without surgery; the Ruffs chalk it up to faith.

Robert Stewart is a recent Ruff House graduate. He came to the Ruffs in January 1987, after he lost his job. They paid his tuition at El Centro College, where he trained in health care. He married Lynn, another resident, who had come to

Ruff House to escape an abusive relationship.

He now works for Lancaster Residential Center for the retarded.

He recently got a raise, and last month the couple had a baby.

Diane Atkinson has no physical problems when she arrived at Ruff House in 1976.

Her handicaps were emotional. "I was going through some personal problems and had contemplated suicide," she said. "I got laid off from my job."

She's living on her own now and working as a security guard, but she frequently comes back to visit "Mamma and Pappa," which is what everyone at Ruff House calls the Ruffs.

Darlys Sager left Ruff House, had problems and returned. Before she first came two years ago, she was living in the back of a pickup at Lake Ray Hubbard.

"My kids' daddy abandoned us at the Salvation Army and I went into premature labor," Sager said.

After she had the baby, Parkland

officials called the Ruffs, who gave her a home.

"Every time I've tried to leave, I've fallen flat on my face," she said.

To end that cycle, the Ruffs sent her to a Dallas County Community College job training program.

"I am now qualified to take an entry-level accounting position," she said proudly, adding that she had several job interviews lined up in the coming weeks.

Generally, the Ruffs said, they allow people to stay with them for about four months, if necessary.

But residents are expected to follow certain basic rules — no alcohol, no drugs, keep your living space clean and be considerate of other residents.

The Ruffs acknowledge that dealing with dozens of physically and emotionally troubled people is difficult.

"But it was given to us as a mission," Alice Ruff says. "And when God gives you something, you give it away."

Texas legislature discusses possible state income taxes

AUSTIN (AP) — Some Texas legislators are so fearful of discussing even the possibility of a state income tax that they refer to it as the "I" word.

Other Texans say that when it comes to an income tax, the pertinent "I" word is "inevitable," given the need to pay for critical state services.

One thing they agree on is that the idea of taxing corporate and personal income — a move that would raise billions of dollars for a state that has struggled in recent years to fund public services — stirs unusually strong emotions.

"For the most part, the people who have come before our committee say the income tax is a godsend, or they say it's a beast from hell," Billy Hamilton, executive director of the Select Committee on Tax Equity, said. The panel was created last year by the Legislature to make recommendations about the state tax system.

"It's kind of like in the olden days," Hamilton, former chief revenue estimator at the state comptroller's office and former research director for the Texas Association of Taxpayers, said. "People thought tomatoes were poisonous until somebody bit one and found out they weren't. Right now, we haven't got to the tomato stage on this."

Gary E. Wood, president of the Texas Research League, said, "There is just a visceral aversion to the word 'income tax' in Texas, and a lot of people feel that there's some sort of mystical reason not to have one."

But economist Bernard Weinstein, director of the Center for Enterprising at Southern Methodist University, said Texans who don't want an income tax may not have all the facts.

"We've got to understand that all taxes are income taxes . . . all taxes come out of income. I think it is imperative that we shift over to a system of direct taxation and away from the system of indirect taxation we've been using," Weinstein said.

Rep. Stan Schlueter, a Killeen Democrat who heads the House Ways and Means Committee, was matter-of-fact in predicting the impact on the Legislature that would dare to approve an income tax. "One hundred and eighty one new members (of the Legislature)," he said. "A new governor. A new lieutenant governor. The public feeling is that strong."

Schlueter has unsuccessfully tried to win legislative approval for a constitutional ban on a state income tax.

Rep. Dan Morales, a San Antonio Democrat who is vice-chairman of the House tax committee, said that someday, with spiraling property and sales taxes, "I can foresee a situation where the public will believe and the public will make the judgment that an income tax is the lesser of the available evils."

But the public must decide that before lawmakers will act, he said.

The income tax is a potential monster of a money-maker for a state dealing with court rulings on

schools, prisons and facilities for the mentally retarded.

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have corporate income taxes, according to information presented at a tax policy conference last year. Texas is one of 10 states without a personal income tax.

The select tax committee prepared estimates on possible revenue from an income tax. The estimate said various versions of the tax could raise \$5 billion to \$7.8 billion the first year. The report assumes the new tax would be fully implemented in 1991, but conceded it may be an unlikely schedule.

Tony Proffitt, spokesman for state Comptroller Bob Bullock, said a 1991 effective date is unrealistic. He said it could take several years to implement a personal income tax, except in the unlikely event that the Legislature created a state income tax figured as a straight percentage of the federal income tax, without state exemptions.

Bullock, asked by the committee to estimate revenue from a corporate income tax, said a version that levy would generate about \$4 million annually in net revenue starting in five years. It would take about 31 months to implement and there would be "very significant" administrative costs, he said.

Sen. Grant Jones of Temple, who long headed the Senate Finance Committee but is leaving the Legislature after losing the Democratic primary election, predicted Texas would have an income tax within five years.

"I don't think you can raise enough money with selective taxes to meet the responsibilities of the state," Jones said. He said an income tax should be passed before revenue is critically needed, because of the time it takes to implement.

An income tax is "inevitable," Weinstein said. "There is no way to broaden the tax base to make it fair and efficient and generate revenues we desperately need for schools, for highways, for social programs, everything," he said.

The SMU economist predicted the impetus for a Texas income tax will be the need for massive education finance reform. The state is appealing a judge's ruling that the current school finance system is unconstitutional.

But Weinstein said the change would not come before 1993, and legislative redistricting gives the Legislature more urban and minority representation.

He also noted that people who itemize their federal taxes cannot deduct the state income taxes they pay. State sales taxes no longer are deductible.

That raises the ire of House Speaker Gib Lewis.

"I think the Congress purposefully targeted Texas and those states that do not have a personal income tax . . . I think it was done purposely to force those states to a personal income tax," Lewis said.

Candidates claim Hispanic support

AUSTIN (AP) — Republicans and Democrats both claimed Thursday that Texas Hispanics will help put their presidential candidates over the top on Nov. 8.

Gov. Bill Clements and a new Hispanic Republican group predicted that Vice President Bush will receive the 35 percent of the Texas Hispanic vote they believe he needs to win the state.

"Unquestionably, the Hispanic vote is going to be critical to this election. I don't think this election can be won in the state of Texas without the Hispanic vote," said Ernesto Ancira of San Antonio, co-chairman of the newly formed Hispanics for Bush organization.

Clements said President Reagan received between 37 percent and 38 percent of the Hispanic vote in 1984, and he said 35 percent was a good target this year.

"I think that our goal of 35 percent is realistic and that we'll achieve it," Clements said.

But state Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, in a statement distributed by Gov. Michael Dukakis' campaign, said Texas Hispanics increasingly are supporting the Democrat.

"Eight years of Republicanism has blocked entry to the middle class for large numbers of Hispanics and made it increasingly difficult to maintain a middle-class family lifestyle," Truan said.

Truan said Census Bureau figures indicate that 353,000 Hispanics fell below the poverty line between 1986 and 1987. He said the number of Hispanic students entering college is falling and that Labor Department statistics show an increase in Hispanic unemployment over that of the general population.

"The drive to enter the American middle class mainstream has faltered because of the Republican adminis-

tration's total lack of concern for the bread and butter interests of the vast majority of Americans," Truan said.

Clements, co-chairman of Bush's Texas campaign, took a swipe at Dukakis' ability to speak Spanish as he argued that Texas Hispanics share the vice president's beliefs.

"On issue after issue — from traditional family values to tough anti-crime measures — the vice president shares the views held by the majority of the people of this country and, especially, the people in our state of Texas," Clements said. "He knows it takes more than speaking Spanish to understand the needs of our Hispanic citizens."

But Truan saw it differently.

"Both Dukakis and (Sen. Lloyd) Bentsen speak our language — on education, on health care, on jobs, on child care, on expanding the rights of all Americans," he said.

"On top of all this, one half of the Republican ticket, Sen. Dan Quayle, voted to abolish the bilingual provision of the Voting Rights Act, even though it was publicly supported by President Reagan."

In other political developments: — Judge Paul Pressler of the Houston-based 14th Court of Appeals said he was switching from the Democratic to Republican parties. Pressler, 58, also is a member of the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and served in the Texas Legislature from 1957 to 1959.

"Judge Pressler, like many people searching for the true conservative party, is welcome in the GOP," said state Republican Chairman Fred Meyer. "This sends a clear signal that the Democrat Party is out of touch with the people of this state."

Democratic Party executive director Ed Martin said Pressler's declaration Thursday was no surprise.

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