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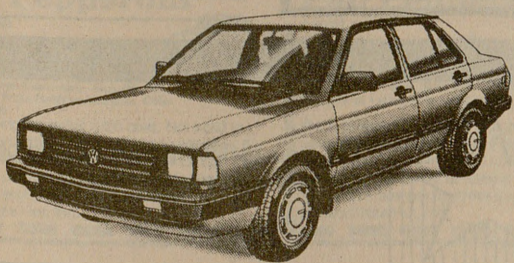
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# Education has 'grave deficits,' secretary says

KINGSVILLE (AP) — U.S. Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos returned Tuesday to where he learned to read and write, and he called on all Americans to involve themselves in solving "grave deficits" in the nation's schools.

Cavazos, in his first major university speech since he was confirmed by the Senate less than a month ago after his nomination by President Ronald Reagan, decried the high drop-out and illiteracy rate in the United States.

"The American dream is more like a nightmare for adolescents who don't finish high school," Cavazos said in the keynote address at a meeting at Texas A&I University, where he began his college education after returning from service in World War II.

He also cited the need for remedial instruction even among students who finish high school, and an impending shortage of scientists and engineers.

The education secretary was born on the vast King Ranch south of Kingsville, where his father was a foreman. He learned to read and write at the Santa Gertrudis School on the ranch.

Cavazos, the first Hispanic member of the Cabinet, greeted a group of students from the Santa Gertrudis school and later visited H.M. King High School, where he graduated in 1944.

"It is a clear message that I really want to give to all of our country, and that is to raise the awareness of the people in this country to the serious deficits

we have in school," Cavazos said in an interview Tuesday.

Nearly 50 percent of Hispanic students and 33 percent of Anglos and blacks drop out before finishing high school, Cavazos said.

But Americans also are concerned more about education than ever before, he added.

"This nation has engaged in the most ambitious effort to improve education in its history," Cavazos said.

The report "A Nation at Risk" produced five years ago by the National Commission on Excellence in Education started a massive school reform movement, he said.

Cavazos cited last year's education-oriented bestsellers "Cultural Literacy" and "The Closing of the American Mind" as further examples of the public's growing interest in education.

Americans can help improve the schools by remaining interested and personally encouraging students and educators, the education secretary said.

Cavazos also has been campaigning on behalf of the presidential race of Vice President George Bush, who has said he wants to be known as the "education president."

Cavazos on Monday helped inaugurate the Republicans' "Adelante Con Bush" (Forward With Bush) office in Corpus Christi, but said he could not speculate on whether he would remain in the Cabinet when President Reagan's term expires Jan. 20.

# Court turns down retarded convict's appeal for stay

AUSTIN (AP) — A Texas death row inmate, convicted in the 1974 slaying of a Port Arthur couple, was denied an execution stay Tuesday by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

Attorneys from the University of Texas Capital Punishment Clinic in Austin filed an appeal on Walter Bell's behalf with the appellate court last week asking for a reprieve, court spokesman Rick Wetzel said.

Attorney Eden Harrington said Bell is mentally retarded and should not be executed as scheduled early Friday.

The case is now before U.S. District Judge Sam Hall in Marshall.

The state attorney general's office is arguing that Bell, whose 13 years and four months on death row ranks him third in seniority among the approximately 260 condemned inmates in Texas, should have brought up the mentally retarded issue before, spokesman Bob Walt said.

Bell, as well as other death row inmates, are relying on a case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court involving the legality of executing mentally retarded people.

The nation's high court agreed to review the case of Texas death row inmate Johnny Penry after attorneys contended executing the 32-year-old would be cruel and unusual punishment banned by the Eighth Amendment.

Penry, whose IQ has been estimated at

between 50 and 60, and who had the reasoning capacity of a 7-year-old, was sentenced to death in 1979. He was sentenced after being found guilty for the rape-slaying of a Livingston woman in her home.

The Supreme Court is not expected to rule on the case until late spring or early next summer.

Bell was first sentenced to die in December 1974 for the rape-slaying of Irene Chisum, who was a Port Arthur housewife.

Chisum, 59, and her husband, Ferd, 50, were killed July 19, 1974, after being tied up in their home and robbed.

Bell's conviction in Mrs. Chisum's death was vacated in January 1984 and he was given a life sentence in May 1984.

The conviction was vacated because he had been interviewed by a state psychiatrist without being warned that the psychiatrist was gathering information that later could be used against him in court.

Prior to the commutation in Mrs. Chisum's death, Bell was convicted of capital murder in Ferd Chisum's death and was given the death penalty.

Bell had been employed by Chisum at his appliance repair store, but had recently been fired.

He was arrested after trying to cash a check on the Chisums' bank account.

Nine other Texas death row inmates have executions scheduled over the next four months.

# Sibling saves brother, receives certificate

AUSTIN (AP) — Heather Lopez-Cepero discovered the flames in the hallway on that April evening after the power to her tape player shut off.

She dashed outside and ran to a neighbor for help.

But it was her quick decision to smash a window with her hands and rescue her brother, Tony, that earned her a certificate of commendation from the Austin Fire Department.

During a ceremony Monday to announce promotions and present other certificates for outstanding service, Fire Chief Bill Roberts honored the 15-year-old Austin High School student for her heroic actions that saved the life of her brother.

Tony turned 7 years old on Tuesday, thanks to the brave and thoughtful efforts of his sister.

Heather's mother was working late, and her brother was asleep in their mother's room of their South Austin home when the fire was discovered about 10:30 p.m. on April 10.

"I opened the hall door, and flames were all in the hallway," Heather said.

"I went outside and got a neighbor. They thought I was saying that a robber had gotten back in the window," she said.

But her brother's safety was what occupied Heather's mind.

"I was trying to find a rock to punch the window with," she said.

"I couldn't find it, so I punched it

with my hand," she said.

After the window was broken, she pulled Tony outside the window and saved his life.

Jean Lopez-Cepero, their mother, said her bedroom door was described as "framed in flames," and fire had spread into a bathroom.

The door was next to the window where Heather rescued her brother, she said.

Heather suffered several small cuts on her hand after striking the glass window twice.

Heather said, "I didn't notice it till about 10 minutes afterward.

"They said if Tony had been in 10 minutes more, he would have been done in from smoke inhalation."

The fire damaged 60 percent of the house, which has been rebuilt.

Firefighters said the blaze started in a hallway furnace.

Fire Lt. Stephen Cook, whose job includes teaching fire prevention, said few firefighters knew of Heather's heroism until her school principal called him about her actions, having overheard talk from students.

Cook said Tony actually would not have survived for two or three more minutes, rather than 10, before Heather rescued him.

"There's no doubt in my mind that she saved his life through her actions, and that's why we recognized her for this award," Cook said.

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