

United States' median age heads up to record high of 39 in 2010

WASHINGTON (AP)—The maturing of America will raise the nation's median age to Jack Benny's never-changing 39 by the year 2010, the Census Bureau estimated Wednesday.

The maturing of the post-World War II Baby Boom generation is combining with that group's relatively small production of offspring to raise the median to its highest point ever.

The median age — meaning half

of Americans are older and half younger than that mark — touched 30 for the first time in 1950, then slipped back as the Baby Boom lowered the numbers.

It took until the 1980 census to hit 30 again, edged up to 31.7 as of 1986 and is expected to climb to 33.0 by 1990, 36.5 by 2000 and 39.0 by 2010, the bureau's projected.

Whether the aging of United States will halt at that point, as it did jokingly for the late comedian

Benny, the depends on birth and death rates in the coming years.

The new projections are based on the assumptions that current trends will continue.

At that rate, despite the aging of the population overall, the so-called dependency ratio is expected to decline.

That ratio is the number of people under 18 and over 65 compared with the number of people of working age in between.

The younger and older groups are said to depend on those working.

The 1986 ratio of 62.2 dependents per 100 workers is expected to slip to 56.7 by the year 2010, with the low birth rate reducing the number of young dependents to a greater extent than aging adds to the older group.

While there have been reports of increases in the total number of births in the last few years, that is a result of the fact that the giant Baby Boom generation is largely in its prime child-bearing years. The rate

of births per 1,000 remains well below that of the post-World War II period.

The Census Bureau study also estimated that the nation's black population will increase to 13.7 percent by 2010.

Blacks made up 11.8 percent of the population in the 1980 census.

The projections said the Northeast continues as the oldest section of the country by population, with the median age for that region increasing from 33.6 years in 1986 to 40.3 in 2010.

The South will be second in 2010 at a median age of 38.4, up from 31.4 in 1986.

The Midwest will mature from 31.6 to 38.8 and the West will go from 31.0 to 37.4, the study projected.

Florida, a retirement haven, will remain the state with the highest median age and Utah will still be the youngest state, according to the projections.

College groups ask to end hype over admittance

WASHINGTON (AP)—Two groups representing colleges and universities on Wednesday called for an end to the hype over school ratings based primarily on how well incoming students score on entrance exams.

The American Council on Education and the College Board said undue emphasis on such rankings is causing some college-bound youths to mistakenly think they aren't good enough for universities with high scores and to overlook fine schools where scores are lower.

"Test results are only one indicator of the quality of incoming students, and the quality of incoming students... does not necessarily say anything useful about the quality of what goes on in a college or university," the two groups said in an open letter to schools and education officials.

The organizations reiterated their recommendation that schools report incoming students' test scores in ranges, such as the highest and lowest scores of the middle 50 percent of their freshman class, rather than giving an average test result.

"The use of test score data in isolation, as a measure of quality with which to compare or rank-list colleges, is a clear misuse which should be curbed," the letter said.

College Board President Don-

ald M. Stewart said at a news conference that the letter was designed to diffuse some of the hype over college guidebooks and other reports that rank colleges primarily on how their incoming students fare on standardized exams.

"Students should be looking at institutions because they're exciting places and they want to be there, not because they're No. 1 on a bloody chart," Stewart said.

"... The whole teaching and learning processes are being distorted."

Robert H. Atwell, president of the American Council on Education, said he was "very concerned about the guidebook phenomenon."

He said rankings by test scores can be misleading since schools may include different categories of students in their averages.

For example, some leave out athletes and other special-admittance groups, he said.

"You can move up and down one of those lists... almost whimsically or accidentally," Atwell said.

As colleges compete for dwindling numbers of high school graduates, they place too much importance on getting a good ranking and sometimes tout high scores even while knowing full well the limitations of such lists, he added.

Virginia students trust honor system

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP)—A 75 percent vote against recalling the University of Virginia's honor committee chairman, accused of plagiarism, showed confidence for the school's 146-year-old honor system, a student said Wednesday.

Dan Philpott, who organized a group called Students for the Preservation of Trust in support of honor chairman J. Brady Lum, a senior from Houston, Texas, said it was important for Lum to win by a large margin to show that students still had faith in the honor system that cleared Lum of plagiarism charges.

About 40 percent of the undergraduate student body turned out for the recall vote. About 25 percent, or 892 students voted to recall Lum, while 75 percent, or 2,673 students, voted to have him keep his position.

Lum was accused of plagiarism earlier this year by a staff member of the University Journal, a student newspaper. The paper refused to print a letter Lum wrote for its special summer edition because of passages that closely resembled parts of

a letter written a year earlier by the previous honor chairman as well as phrases borrowed from a professor's 1984 speech.

Lum said that he had read the speech five months earlier and the words must have stuck in his head. He and his supporters argued that using his predecessor's letter to the paper was like using a form letter and did not constitute plagiarism.

The letter was intended to introduce incoming students to the school's honor code.

Lum's conduct was investigated twice by the honor committee, which cleared him of any honor violation. A group of students calling themselves Students for Honor gathered close to 900 signatures calling for a recall election in conjunction with this week's student council elections.

"I don't think anybody likes to see the honor system splashed across the front pages of the newspapers," said Mark Kehoe, a leader of the recall movement. "I know I didn't. But I thought to save the system from further damage, Brady should be recalled."

Residents return, start cleaning after cotton fire devastates town

ALTUS, Okla. (AP)—As giant mounds of cotton smoldered in the distance, residents of a 20-block area of Altus moved back in Wednesday to see what a devastating cotton fire had left of their homes and businesses.

"Fire came and took everything," said Jose Cresencios Briones, whose house and storage shed were reduced to ashes by the fire that began in a storage field Tuesday and quickly spread to houses and businesses on the south side of the city.

Briones worked at a local cotton processing plant and also ran a landscaping business. The blaze destroyed the plant and his dozen lawnmowers. He said his property was partially insured, but he did not know where he would work or how he would house his wife and five children.

"There's nothing left to do but wait," he said, staring blankly at the remains.

Winds gusting to 65 mph carried burning bits of newly harvested cotton through the city Tuesday afternoon, destroying at least 25 homes and four businesses. Eighteen people were treated at Jackson County Memorial Hospital for minor injuries, and 400 were evacuated from their homes.

Bob Dantzer, who owns a plant that processes leftover cotton into usable products, said plastic

tarps that covered the cotton modules stored in the nearby field sounded like rifle fire as they snapped in the wind.

"It's a flammable product," Dantzer said. "What we've got here is a worst-case scenario."

Dantzer did not own any of the burned cotton. "We had a big wind, a lot of cotton, and it (the cotton) was extremely dry," he said.

"I can't imagine anyone thinking up a scenario like this, where there would be a fire break out in a field of cotton modules when the wind is blowing 60 miles per hour," Gov. Henry Bellmon said after a 30-minute tour of the area Wednesday morning.

"It sounds like a scene out of a horror movie."

The fire did not sweep through the low-income neighborhood on the south side of Altus, a town of about 23,000. Instead, the burning pieces of cotton targeted some homes but not others.

The flames missed the trailer of Bill Tackett, but razed that of his neighbor 15 feet away.

"Lucky," Tackett said. "I'm telling you, I'm lucky. It could have been worse. Because of the smoke, the firemen couldn't get around to all of the houses."

Aside from the stiff winds, the thick smoke made battling the blaze difficult.

"We couldn't see a hand or foot in front of our face," said firefighter Eddie Williamson, who helped fight the blaze and evacuate residents. "We had to feel from house to house."

Police Chief Jim Hughes said the destroyed cotton was probably worth about \$3 million. He added that about 100 homes were damaged by smoke, but did not have an estimate of monetary damages.

City administrator Joe Courtney said several teams including Civil Defense, the Red Cross and city workers were going over damages Wednesday.

"We'll have to put all those numbers (estimates) together and that'll tell us if we qualify for federal assistance," he said. Tuesday night, Courtney had said the city would seek whatever help it could find.

Bellmon said a Civil Defense team would come to the city later Wednesday for a more thorough damage inspection.

"If we need more people on it, then we'll get DHS (Department of Human Services) or others involved," he said.

Courtney said the cause of fire had not been determined.

City officials said local residents were donating goods, and, by early afternoon, \$4,000 in cash donations had been collected.



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Open House II will be January 21, 1989 from 4pm - 8pm.


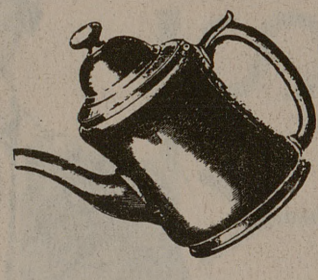


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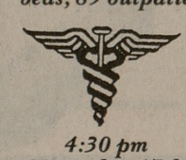
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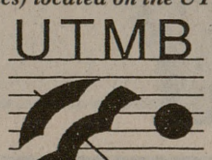
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