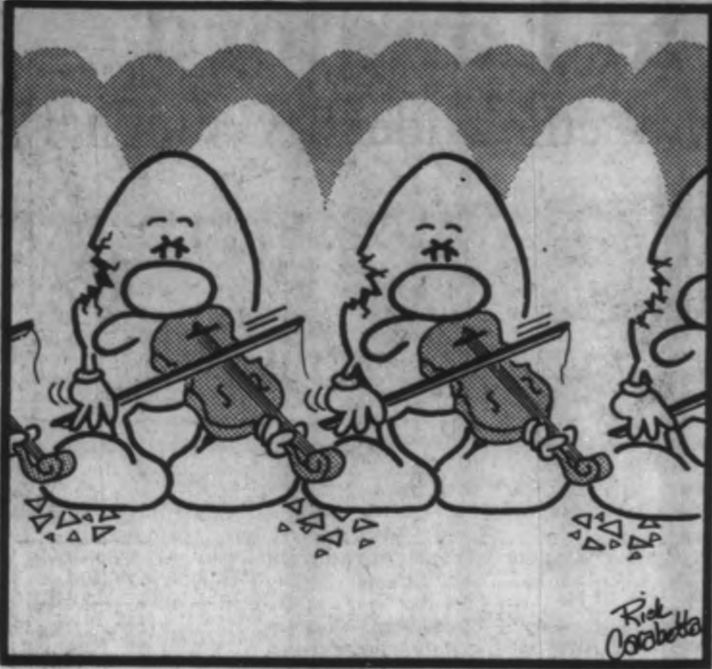


Scrambled Eggs



Cat owner gets help from sympathizers after loss in court

FORT WORTH (AP) — Donations have poured in to help an 80-year-old woman pay the \$50 fine she owes after losing a bizarre court case concerning the bathroom habits of her cats.

Residents who have read news accounts of Nan Farris' court hearing have been sending money — about \$400 so far. Farris lives on \$410 a month in Social Security benefits.

"All these people — they didn't have to do this," Farris told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "I was amazed. I never asked anyone for help, but I guess I'll keep the money. I've got four more tickets coming up, so I may need it."

She was ordered nearly two weeks ago to pay the fine in connection with two of six citations she received charging her with violating animal control ordinances.

"I just really don't know what to say," Farris said. "I never knew there was so many wonderful people around who would do something like this to help someone."

One of Farris' neighbors complained that cats Farris adopted were littering his yard. Farris was found guilty of failing to properly restrain the cat.

The jury foreman told reporters after the verdict that all six jurors had agreed the ordinance was ridiculous but that they had had no choice but to find Farris guilty.

Future of 'Texas plan' looks better

Hightower: Officials back plan for exporting hormone-free beef

AUSTIN (AP) — Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower voiced optimism Monday that federal agriculture and trade officials now are behind the "Texas plan" for selling hormone-free beef to Europe.

"All the early signs are good," Hightower said. "It could happen very quickly. It can happen as fast as USDA wants it to. We do have beef now that would be eligible for immediate export."

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter, U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills and top trade officials from the European Economic Community are scheduled to meet this weekend, and Hightower said he expects the beef controversy to be discussed.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Hightower said there appears to have been a dramatic change in attitude in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"They've gone from saying, 'hell no and you may be in violation of federal law' to saying, 'Oh

please can we work with you?," Hightower said.

The agriculture commissioner said he hopes this weekend's meeting means peace will break out in the "beef war" which began when the European Community announced a ban on imports of beef treated with artificial growth hormones.

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture initially announced that it couldn't comply with such requirements, Hightower moved to establish a Texas certification program to allow export of Texas-inspected hormone-free beef and veal to Europe.

Then last week the Bush administration appeared to switch signals, with the president himself saying it was time to "rise above fighting about beef hormones."

Hightower said it now appears the Texas plan will be used as the basis for establishing a new trade agreement that could mean millions in sales for U.S. livestock producers.

"The thing that convinced me we really were

right was not what the European Community was saying but what our own producers were saying," Hightower explained.

"When a guy with the stature and experience of David Eller (chairman of the Granada Corp., an international beef producer) was not only willing — but actually thought it important — to come forward and make a statement . . . it became clear to me we were on the right trail," he said.

Hightower said U.S. cattlemen had legitimate fears about the growth hormone issue, adding that Texas agricultural officials sought to emphasize that there is no scientific evidence that the hormones do any harm to humans.

"There was genuine concern by the cattle industry that this could generate a widespread health panic or something," he said. "So we took special precautions to make clear we weren't raising a health issue, we were raising a market issue. We're talking about giving customers what they want."

Houston woman charged with murder of husband

HOUSTON (AP) — A woman who recently checked herself into a private psychiatric facility has been charged with capital murder in the stabbing of her husband, authorities said.

Carol Diane Jebbia, 35, is accused of helping kill her husband, whose death provided a substantial insurance policy, Harris County Sheriff's investigators said.

She was arrested early Sunday at a psychiatric facility in the presence of her lawyer, famed defense attorney Richard "Racehorse" Haynes. Jebbia and two other people have been charged with capital murder for remuneration in the Dec. 21 fatal stabbing of Carl Jebbia, 43, a telephone company supervisor who was found slain in his home.

On Monday, a bond hearing for Jebbia was postponed until Friday. She and the other two re-

mained in the Harris County Jail without bond.

Sheriff's homicide detectives said several insurance policies for a "considerable sum" were drafted in Jebbia's name, eight months before his death and named his wife as sole beneficiary. Detective Max Cox declined to reveal the policies' worth.

Jebbia has not collected on them, Lt. Ralph Smith said.

According to documents filed with the charges, Jebbia allegedly got Shirley Ann Agonsi, 43, of Beaumont, her former live-in maid and friend, to hire someone to carry out the murder for an unspecified amount of jewelry.

Although authorities believe Jebbia wanted Agonsi to act as a go-between, the two women are accused of killing the man themselves.

Mexican bank encourages establishment of 'twin plants'

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP) — Mexican manufacturers were encouraged to become major suppliers to twin manufacturing plants under an agreement signed by Juarez businesses and the head of a government bank.

Nacional Financiera, a state-run bank, will establish "clear and expedient" credit policies for small businesses seeking to sell products and services to twin plants in Mexico, Juan Jose Paramo, the bank's national director, said.

The agreement, signed Saturday, will allow Mexican businesses to profit from the twin-plant, or maquiladora, industry, Paramo said.

Under the maquiladora concept, companies from the United States and other foreign countries ship components to Mexico, where they are assembled by low-paid laborers. The finished products are then shipped back to the home country, and tariffs are paid only on the value added instead of the total value of the product.

With about 125,000 twin-plant employees, Juarez accounts for

more than one-third of Mexico's maquiladora workforce.

The Mexican government has been trying to boost the domestic content of goods made in maquiladoras. Right now, well less than 10 percent of components in maquiladora-made goods come from Mexican suppliers.

Nacional Financiera "encourages the rise of a competitive domestic market of services to supply the specialized demands of twin plants," Paramo said.

The bank will provide financial advisers and promote related services to Mexican businesses, he said. The agreement establishes a partnership between Juarez Economic Development, a quasi-private industry council, and Nacional Financiera in which the partners will promote Mexican products at foreign-trade shows.

Jaime Serra Puche, Mexico's minister of trade and economic development, said it is in Mexico's best interest to produce and supply domestic goods as a way to reduce imports.

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